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THE STORY OF THE RAMAYANA

ABRIDGED AND ADAPTED

FROM

Wheeler's History of India

SATIS CHANDRA SEN B.A.

*Of the Bengal Educational Service
Head Master Hindu School Calcutta*

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FOREWORD.

In the following pages, I have endeavoured to present the story of the Ramayana divested of all superfluities, in a concise form, at the same time the continuity of the story has been preserved, so that its interest may not be lost. The Historian has deviated from Valmiki in a few instances where I have thought it proper to adhere to the original.

I owe a word of acknowledgment to Mr Ramanaidu Chatterjee and Messrs. U Roy and Sons for their kind permission for the use of the illustrations in this book.

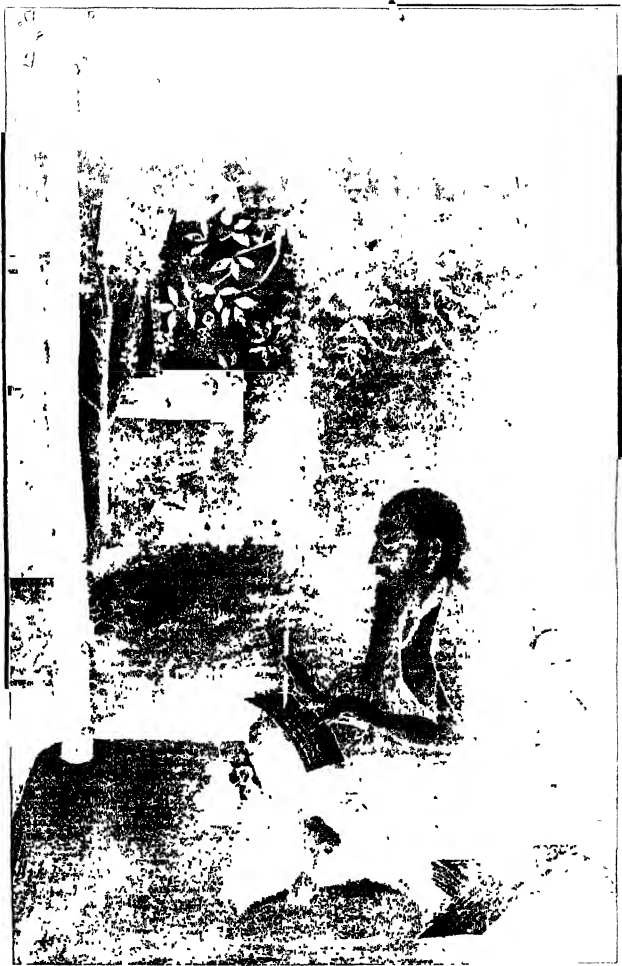
HINDU SCHOOL	}	SATIS CHANDRA SEN
15th October, 1920.		

INTRODUCTION

I have found pleasure in reading this book. Babu Sen is Chandra Sen is an experienced and distinguished teacher and I believe his version of these old legends will be found useful by many other teachers, and fascinating by many schoolboys. I think that books of this kind, telling in simple English the stories that come to Indian boys as part of their heritage, are of general value to teachers and students of English.

W. C. WORDSWORTH

Principal Presidency College.



Valmiki composing the Ramayana.
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RAMAYANA

CHAPTER

The City of Ayodhya.

In ancient times there was a great country named Kosala which was happy and joyous. And in that country, on the banks of the river Sarayu, was a famous city named Ayodhya, with large and beautifully arranged houses, richly decorated temples, stately palaces and pleasant gardens. The people of Ayodhya were prosperous, healthy and happy ; her merchants had storehouses filled with jewels from every quarter of the earth ; her Brahmanas were deeply read in the Vedas, were generous, truthful and compassionate. In all that city there were no misers, nor liars, nor thieves. The men fixed their affection upon their wives only ; the women were chaste and obedient to their husbands, and all were patient and faithful in the discharge of their several duties.

In this city reigned the mighty Dasaratha, the Maharaja of the country of Kosala. He was very wise and was loved by all his people ; and he protected his subjects like another Manu. In supplying the wants and necessities of the people, he proved himself to be their true father, more so than their real fathers ; and he took tribute from his subjects, not for his own use, but to return it to them again with greater beneficence, as the sun drinks up the salt ocean to return it to the earth as vivifying rain. His ministers were likewise possessed of every excellence, wise, quick to discern, and constantly devoted to their beloved Maharaja.

CHAPTER II.

The Horse Sacrifice of Maharaja Dasaratha.

Now the Maharaja had three Ranis, and their names were Kausalya, Kaikeyi, and Sumitra ; but no son was born to him to perpetuate his race, and the thought arose in his mind that he would perform an Aswamedha sacrifice, and thus propitiate the gods to give him a son. And he obtained the approval of his priests and preceptors and appointed Rishyasringa to be chief priest or *hotá* in the Aswamedha. When the Aswamedha was duly performed the Rishi said to the Maharaja :—" I will perform another sacrifice to secure you a son." And he proceeded to do as he had said. And when the sacrifice according to the ordinance had been performed, the Maharaja distributed the sacrificial *charu(a)* to the Ranis.

After this the Ranis bore four sons ; Kausalya gave birth to Rama, and Kaikeyi to Bharata ; and Sumitra having received two quarters of the *payasa(b)* food gave birth to two sons Lakshmana

(a) Rice or other grain boiled with milk and ghee.

(b) Same as *charu*.

and Satrughna. And on the birth of these four sons there were great rejoicings in the city of Ayodhya amongst all ranks of people, and the streets were filled with dancers and musicians, and decked with flowers and banners.

CHAPTER III.

The Education of the Princes.

When Rama and his brothers were five years of age, they commenced their education according to rule. Vasishtha was appointed to be their preceptor, and he initiated them in their studies in the accustomed form. When they had learnt all their letters, they began to read grammar ; and in a short time they became well versed in languages and accomplished in the fine arts ; so that the citizens expressed their great wonder at the proficiency of the sons of the Maharaja.

When the four brothers had passed out of their childhood, they were exercised in the use of arms and in military and royal games.

After this, the four princes were invested with the sacred thread, and began to learn the Vedas ; and in due time they grew up like four heroes and were possessed of every virtue. They were bright as the moon, skilful in archery, expert in riding the elephant, the horse, and in driving the chariot ; and they were devoted to all the wishes of their parents. But Rama excelled all his brothers, and was as conspicuous

amongst them as a flag upon a tower ; and whilst ,
all grew up in loving attachment `to one other,
Lakshmana was the special companion of Rama,
and rejoiced to do whatever was pleasing to
him.



Viswamitra asking Dasaratha for Rama and Lakshmana.
(Mahadeva Biswanath Dhurandhar.)

By courtesy of Babu Ramananda Chatterjee.

CHAPTER IV.

Wars with the Rakshasas.

When Rama and his brothers were approaching their sixteenth year, the Maharaja became very anxious about their marriage. It so happened that one day when he was discussing the subject with his Counsellors, the great sage Viswamitra arrived at the gate of the palace. When the Maharaja heard this, he rose with his two priests, and went out to meet the sage, and received Viswamitra with every honour, and presented him with the *arghya*(a), saying respectfully, "Tell me, I pray you, what important request you have to make, and I shall grant it with great delight."

Now Viswamitra was a very illustrious sage, for in former times he had been a Kshatriya and a great warrior; but after practising many religious austerities he had become a Brahman. And Viswamitra said to the Maharaja:—"O Raja of Rajas, our sacrifices are spoiled by the Rakshasas led by Maricha and Suvahu who pour blood and flesh upon the *homa*(b). I therefore

(a) An oblation of rice and grass (Dutva).

(b) Sacrifice.

pray you to suffer your son Rama to return with me to my hermitage, for he is young, great, and valiant, and the Rakshasas will never be able to stand against him." At these words the Maharaja was exceedingly sorrowful, and said :— " My son Rama has not yet reached his sixteenth year : I will therefore send a great army with you, but I cannot give up Rama." Then Viswamitra was angry, and said :—" O Maharaja, you have given me your promise, and you cannot depart from your word : make haste then, and send Rama, and I will so protect him that he shall never be overcome by the Rakshasas." So the Maharaja sent for Rama and Lakshmana, and gave them to the sage ; and the two Princes took leave of their parents, and made ready to go with Viswamitra. Viswamitra instructed Rama on the way, and performed all the duties of a Guru. And when evening was come, they slept on beds of grass by the side of the river Sarayu.

Now, when morning began to dawn, the three proceeded on their journey as before, until they came to the place where the waters of the river Sarayu join those of the Ganges ; and there they saw a sacred hermitage where many holy Brahmanas practised religious austerities. Viswamitra and the two Princes were hospitably entertained

by the Brahmanas in the hermitage, and there they slept that night, and prepared to cross the river in the morning.

Now when the morning had come, the sage and the two Princes crossed the river Ganges, to proceed to the hermitage of Viswamitra. When they reached the other side, they entered a dreadful jungle which was called the wilderness of Taraka. Now in that jungle dwelt a terrible female Rakshasi, named Taraka ; and Viswamitra said to Rama :—“ This cursed Taraka ravages all this country : do you, O Rama, for the sake of the Brahmanas, destroy her : such an act must not be abhorred by you, as being the murder of a woman ; but must be performed as a duty which all Rajas are bound to fulfil for the public good.” Rama replied :—“ I am bound to obey your command.” And Rama said to Lakshmana :—“ Behold this misshapen Rakshasi : my heart shrinks from killing her because she is a woman, but I will deprive her of her strength and power.” And the hero grasped his bow and twanged the string ; and Taraka heard the sound, and was filled with wrath ; and presently she came to that place, roaring out with a loud voice ; and she rushed upon Rama with her arms lifted high in

the air, and rained a shower of stones upon the two sons of Dasaratha. But Rama took a weapon and cut off her two arms, so that they fell upon the earth, and Lakshmana cut off her ears and nose ; on this she disappeared and again by her magic power caused a fearful shower of stones to fall upon the two heroes. Then Viswamitra cried out to Rama :--“ Your unwillingness to kill this impious sacrifice-destroying Rakshasi is very wrong : slay her instantly for the evening is coming on, and in the darkness it is difficult to overcome the Rakshasas.” Then Rama, thus encouraged, drew forth a powerful arrow, and discharged it at the misshapen and vengeful Taraka, as she once more advanced upon him ; and she was dreadfully wounded and, vomiting blood, fell down and died. And Viswamitra rejoiced at her death and kissed the head of Rama, and said to him :—“ Tonight, O Rama, we shall remain here, and on the morrow we shall proceed to my own hermitage.” And the sons of Dasaratha remained that night with the sage in the wilderness of Taraka.

Next morning, the two heroes and the sage proceeded on their way, until they arrived at the hermitage of Viswamitra ; and all the sages who were dwelling at his hermitage came up and

welcomed Rama, and entertained both him and his brother Lakshmana with every hospitality. And the two Princes dwelt at the hermitage of Viswamitra for six days, whilst the Brahmanas made preparation for the sacrifice. Then, when the fire was blazing upon the altar, Maricha and Suvahu and their evil crew of Rakshasas rushed to the altar, and tried to defile the sacrifice with bones and blood, but were prevented by Rama. Rama hurled a mighty weapon at the breast of Maricha and drove him far out into the ocean. He then discharged a blazing weapon at the breast of Suvahu, and brought him to the ground ; and he fell upon the sacrifice-destroying Rakshasas, and slew them all. Viswamitra then bestowed great praises upon Rama ; and Rama and Lakshmana were honoured by all the sages, and passed the night in great satisfaction and joy.

Now when the morning dawned, the sages, with Viswamitra at their head, spoke to the two Princes as follows :—"Janaka, the Raja of Mithila, is about to perform a great sacrifice, which we shall attend, and you may accompany us : and Raja Janaka will show you the great bow of Siva, which neither man nor god can bend." So Rama and Lakshmana and Viswamitra and all the sages journeyed towards Mithila.

CHAPTER. V.

Marriage of Rama.

When Raja Janaka heard that the sage Viswamitra had come to his city, he hastened to receive him with every token of great respect. And when the Raja saw Rama and Lakshmana, he said to Viswamitra :—"Who are these two illustrious youths, majestic, heroic and beautiful?" Viswamitra replied :—"They are the sons of Maharaja Dasaratha, and the conquerors of the Rakshasas, and they are come hither to ask about the great bow." And Janaka showed them the great bow with which Siva had destroyed the gods at the sacrifice of Daksha, and which had ever since that day been preserved in the royal house of Mithila, and worshipped with every honour. And the bow was kept in a large chest. And Raja Janaka said to the two heroes :—"I have promised to give my beautiful daughter Sita in marriage to that Raja who shall succeed in bending the bow ; and all the Rajas of the earth have come hither, and not one has ever been strong enough to lift it from the ground." Now when Rama saw the bow, he

lifted it with one hand from the ground in sport ; and a great multitude looked on in deep amazement. Then Rama made the bow ready with a smile, and putting forth all his strength bent it until it broke in two.

Then Raja Janaka said to the sage :—"This deed of Rama is without parallel, and he shall receive my daughter Sita in marriage. With thy permission, O sage, let messengers on swift horses go hence to the city of Ayodhya, and acquaint Maharaja Dasaratha with all that has occurred, and bring him to this city." And Viswamitra agreed, and the messengers were mounted on swift beasts, and in three nights they arrived at the city of Ayodhya ; and gave their message to the Maharaja. Then the Maharaja consulted Vasishtha and other priests, and they were highly pleased, and all resolved to go to Mithila on the morrow."

Early the next morning, the happy Maharaja set out with his priests and his treasures and all his army, and in four days he arrived at the pleasant city of Mithila ; and Raja Janaka came out to meet him, and received him with every honour. Then Janaka proposed to give his daughter Sita in marriage to Rama, and her sister Urmila in marriage to Lakshmana ; and

also that the two daughters of his brother Kusadhwaja should be married to Bharata and Satrughna. And Viswamitra and Vasishtha approved of the marriages.

Raja Janaka brought his daughter Sita, adorned with every ornament, before the sacred fire, and placed her opposite to the heroic son of Dasaratha ; and he spoke to the lotus-eyed Rama as follows :—“This is my daughter Sita, endowed with every virtue : take her hand in yours, O son of Dasaratha, and she will ever attend you like a shadow : maintain her for life, and be not offended, if she ever commits a fault.” Raja Janaka, in like manner, desired Lakshmana to take the hand of his other daughter Urmila, and Bharata and Satrughna to take the hands of the two daughters of his brother Kusadhwaja. He then sprinkled the bridegrooms and brides with water consecrated by holy mantras ; and performed the nuptial ceremonies in regular form.

Then Maharaja Dasaratha departed from Mithila in great splendour, preceded by his preceptor Vasishtha and the other sages, and accompanied by his sons and daughters-in-law. And as the Maharaja was returning to his own city of Ayodhya, he saw the birds gathering

together on his right hand, and the peaceful deer of the forest flocking around him ; and he was greatly alarmed and asked Vasishtha the meaning of these omens. And Vasishtha replied :—"The birds, O Maharaja, inform you of the approach of something terrible, but the deer who surround you bid you not to be afraid."

While they were thus speaking, a fierce tempest arose which raised the sand in clouds, and caused the earth to quake ; and the air was filled with darkness, and the sun lost its heat, and the country was filled with dust and ashes, and all were sore afraid, except Vasishtha, and the sages, and the sons of Dasaratha. Presently, they saw a mighty being, with a *jatā(a)* on his head, drawing near. He had an axe on his shoulder, and a bow resembling the rainbow, and a fiery shaft in his hand ; and he was angry with Rama for having broken the bow of Siva, and his wrath resembled a fire throwing out its flames through a cloud of smoke. And Vasishtha and the sages knew him to be the Brahman Rama, the famous Rama who was the son of Jamadagni, and in days of old had slain all the Kshatriyas. And being afraid that he had again come to destroy the Kshatriyas, Vasishtha and

the other Brahmanas presented him with propitiatory offerings; but Rama, the son of Jamadagni, without speaking to the sages, turned to Rama, the son of Dasaratha, and spoke as follows :—"O son of Dasaratha, I have heard of your great prowess, and how you have broken the divine bow of Siva, which was made by Viswakarma. But another bow was made by Viswakarma and given to Vishnu, and with this bow I have conquered the whole earth. Take it now, and if you are able to draw it, I will give you battle." Then the heroic son of Dasaratha smiled and took the bow, and fixed the arrow, and discharged it at the sky, saying :—"As you are a Brahman I will not discharge this deadly arrow at you." Then the son of Jamadagni lost his strength, and he respectfully saluted the hero, and went his way to the Mahendra mountain. And Dasaratha felt great joy, and all the sages praised the heroic son of the Maharaja.

After some days Dasaratha approached his own city of Ayodhya, and the city was adorned with banners, and the pleasant streets were watered and strewed with flowers, and the air was filled with the blare of trumpets, and thousands of citizens went out to welcome back



Parasuram.

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their Maharaja ; and the Maharaja was filled with joy , as he saw his people anxious to see him and to do him honour ; and Kausalya and Kaikeyi and Sumitra were ready to embrace their daughters-in-law. Then the sons of Dasaratha, with their newly married wives, bowed down at the feet of their mothers ; and the Ranis took their sons and their sons' wives to the different temples, that they might all bow down their heads before the gods and goddesses in them. Then the brothers and their wives bowed down at the feet of their elders and preceptors, and were conducted to the palace. And all the women of the neighbourhood came and saw the faces of the brides and made them presents according to their rank and the Brahmanas and kinsmen, having been well feasted, went their way, and the marriage was over.

CHAPTER. VI.

Rama Appointed Yuvaraja.

Now Rama was the son of Kausalya, and his brother Bharata was the son of Kaikeyi. And it came to pass that Yudhajit, the brother of Kaikeyi, came to Ayodhya to visit his sister ; and the Maharaja received him kindly and entertained him well. And when Yudhajit prepared to return to his father's city, the Maharaja sent Bharata and Satrugna in his company to pay a visit to their grandfather Raja Aswapati.

Now Maharaja Dasaratha loved his four sons, but Rama most of all ; for Rama was a mine of excellence, eminent in wisdom and religion, learned, generous, heroic and self-controlled. And the thought came into the mind of the Maharaja to appoint his son Rama to be Yuvaraja and his associate in the Government of the Raj. So the Maharaja called together a great council of all his Ministers and Counsellors and all the Chieftains of the Raj, to discuss the installation of Rama. And all the Chieftains, assembled there, rejoiced, having heard the desire of the Maharaja.

Then Dasaratha entreated his preceptors, Vasishtha and Vamadeva, to prepare for the installation of Rama as Yuvaraja on the very morrow, which was sacred and auspicious.

Then he had Rama brought and made his desire known to him, for he had grown old, and it was time that he should retire to the forest for meditation ; so he asked him to pass the night in quiet reflection and the people of Ayodhya, young and old, exulted in his installation.

CHAPTER VII.

Intrigues of Kaikeyi.

Now there was an old nurse named Manthara, servant of the Queen Kaikeyi, who was very ugly and deformed and humpbacked. Now this Manthara ascended to the roof of the palace, and saw the preparations for the installation of Rama and the rejoicings of all the people of the city, and she asked the reason thereof; and when she heard that Rama was to be appointed Raja, she was much troubled, and her eyes were red with anger. So she hastened down from the roof of the palace and ran to the apartment of Kaikeyi and said to her:—“Rise up, you stupid one! Why do you sleep whilst a tremendous calamity is awaiting you? You are born of a royal race, but your husband has deceived you. The Maharaja is fair in speech but deceitful in deed. He has filled you with vain words, and Kausalya with riches. He has sent your son Bharata to your father's city which is far off, that to-morrow he may quietly install the son of Kausalya in the Raj. You must now so act as to prevent the installation.”



Kaikeyi and Manihara.

(Mahadeva Biswanatha Dhurndhar)

By courtesy of Babu Ramananda Chatterjee.

At these words Kaikeyi was filled with surprise, and gave some ornaments to her nurse and said :—"O Manthara, the news you have given is pleasing to me. There is no distinction between Rama and Bharata, and therefore it pleases me that the Maharaja should install his eldest son as helper in the Raj. Let us go to the house of my eldest sister Kausalya, and congratulate her on the installation of her son."

Then Manthara, full of envy and mad with disappointment, threw aside the ornaments given to her by Kaikeyi, and cried out :—"O woman, there is no one in all the world so foolish as you are. Kausalya is very fortunate, for her son is to have the Raj, and you will be her slave, and your son will be the slave of her son. What can be more unfortunate for you than this? And yet you consider it to be a cause for rejoicing."

Kaikeyi replied : -- "Why do you cherish so much hatred against Rama, who is my beloved son, ever virtuous and truthful, and who has the best claim to the Raj. He is the son of the eldest Rani, he is the eldest of the sons of the Maharaja, and he is in every way fitted to have the Raj. He treats me with the same respect as he treats his own mother Kausalya, and when

he gets the Raj he will treat Bharata as his own son. Why then do you pain my heart by speaking against such a happy event ?”

At these words of Kaikeyi, the nurse Manthara was thunderstruck. She breathed hard, and in a tone half of anger and half of supplication, spoke thus to her mistress Kaikeyi :—“ O Rani, have you fallen into such misery that you can rejoice at that for which you ought to mourn ? When Rama becomes Raja, he will certainly send Bharata into exile and secure the Raj for his own sons. Do you, therefore, procure the Raj for your own son Bharata, and persuade the Maharaja to send Rama into the jungle. You are a strange woman ; any other woman would rather die than behold the triumph of a co-wife.”

Then Kaikeyi arose from her couch in great alarm and said : —“ How can I persuade the Maharaja to install my own son Bharata in the Raj and send Rama into exile ?” Manthara, intent on evil, replied :—“ Do you not remember that when Dasaratha went to the war against the demons, he was grievously wounded in the battle and was carried off and preserved by you ? Then he promised you two boons, so do

you now ask two favours of him, the Raj for your son Bharata, and fourteen years' exile for the son of Kausalya. Thus whilst Rama is wandering in the woods, your son will acquire the affection of the people, and enjoy the Raj without molestation. O Rani, feign anger and go into the chamber of displeasure; and when the Raja comes to you, he will not bear to see you angry. Should he offer you pearls or gems or jewels of any kind, pay no attention to him, but only ask for the two boons, the Raj for Bharata, and exile for Rama; otherwise Rama will obtain the Raj and you and your son will become wanderers in the jungle."

Thus excited by her wicked nurse, Rani Kaikeyi, mad with wrath and jealousy, rushed to the chamber of displeasure and threw off her jewels upon the ground and loosening her hair, covered her face in anger.

Meanwhile the Maharaja proceeded to the inner apartments to tell the news to his beloved Kaikeyi. But he did not find her there. Then he thought that perchance she had gone to the apartment of Kausalya to wish her joy on the installation of Rama; and he asked where his beloved had gone. Then the door-keeper was

terrified, and with hands respectfully joined, said :—" O Raja of Rajas, the Rani is in great anger and has rushed to the chamber of displeasure." Hearing these words the Maharaja was exceedingly troubled and went to the chamber of displeasure and saw his young wife, dearer to him than life, lying on the earth in mean garments. And he caressed her and tried to raise her and said :—" Why, my beloved, are you in the chamber of displeasure? Why are you without ornaments, and why do you wear mean attire? I weep as I behold your misery, and surely I have never offended you by night or day. Say if you are sick, that I may send for the best physicians, or that you have been affronted by any one, that I may punish him to please you. I will do whatever you may command. I will give you whatever you may request. There is no want that I cannot satisfy."

The wicked Kaikeyi said :—" O Maharaja, I have neither been maltreated nor defamed, but I have formed a wish which I entreat you to gratify ; and if you will solemnly promise to do as I desire, I will make known my request." Then the Maharaja smiled upon her and said :—" I

swear to grant your request. O my beloved, let me know the wish of your heart, and you will relieve mine. May I lose all the merit of every good I have done upon earth, if I do not grant your request ”

Then holding her lord and entreating him, she said :—“ Remember, O Maharaja, what happend in the war between the gods and demons, when you were surrounded by the enemy, and were in peril of your life ; then, when you were preserved by me, you promised me two favours, and these two favours I now claim. The first is that my son Bharata be installed this day in the stead of Rama. The second is that Rama may embrace the life of a devotee and clothe himself in the skins of deer and the bark of trees and go this day into the forest of Dandaka for fourteen years.”

The Maharaja, hearing these dreadful words, was filled with anguish and fell prostrate upon the ground, like a plantain tree thrown down by a strong wind. Presently he rose himself and said :—“ Am I tormented by demons, or has my reason left me ?” Then when he fully remembered all that Kaikeyi had said, he was as distracted as an antelope at the sight of a tiger.

After a long while, full of affliction and anger, his eyes wrathfully fixed upon Kaikeyi, he thus spoke :—“O cruel wretch, depraved in heart, and destroyer of this family, what has Rama done to you? He has always paid the same reverence to you as to his mother Kausalya; why then are you bent upon his ruin? You have crept into my house like a venomous serpent to destroy me. For what fault should I abandon my beloved son Rama? I could part with Kausalya or with Sumitra or with life itself, but I cannot part with Rama. He conquers mankind by his truthfulness, the Brahmanas by his generosity, his preceptors by his attention and his enemies by his sword and bow. O Kaikeyi, have pity upon an old man who is approaching the end of his days and who humbly supplicates you. It would be easier for a fish to live out of water than for me to live without Rama. Abandon this intention and never let me hear of it again. Moreover, your son Bharata is virtuous and would never accept the Raj, if his elder brother is to go into exile; so your labour would be lost. The husband is the Guru of his wife according to the Sastras, so you must never violate my orders. Save my life by abandoning your evil purpose.

Let me give you jewels instead or anything else that will satisfy you."

Saying these words, the Maharaja fell prostrate at the feet of the Rani, but Kaikeyi was unmoved by his anguish. At length she replied :—"I am prompted by no evil intention. I am in full possession of my senses. Every one calls you truthful, and it is said that you always keep your word. You have promised me two favours, and the time has come for you to grant them. Why do you humble yourself to induce me to absolve you from your promise? Grant me the two favours, and you are free." At these words of Kaikeyi, Dasaratha became exceedingly wroth and would hear no more, but cried out :—"Hard-hearted and wretched woman, what has my son Rama done to you that you wish to send him into exile? For the sake of riches you are bent upon killing your own husband." When Kaikeyi heard these words of the Maharaja, she was furious with rage and said :—"O Maharaja, if after making me two promises, you now refuse to perform them, how will you be esteemed among men? You must say :—'I have broken my word even to her who saved my life;' and you will become infamous among Rajas. If

Rama is anointed I will take poison this day. You know that according to the Puranas, the earth can bear any weight except that of a liar."

Then the Maharaja said to her :—"That hand of yours, which was consecrated with mantras, and which I accepted in the presence of the fire, I now reject for ever, and with you, I reject your son Bharata, although he was born of me." Thus passed that dreadful night in the palace of Maharaja Dasaratha.

CHAPTER VIII.

Exile of Rama.

Now when the morning dawned, all was ready for the installation of Rama. And Vasishtha said to Sumantra who was the Chief Counsellor of Dasaratha :—"Go and hasten the Maharaja, that Rama may receive the Raj as the moon enters the mansion of Pushya." Sumantra, filled with pleasure, entered the palace, and not knowing what had occurred to the Maharaja, approached the curtain at the door of the chamber where Dasaratha had passed the night, and spoke thus :—"O Maharaja, all is ready for the installation of Rama." At these words the venerable Dasaratha was speechless with anguish, but the heartless Kaikeyi said :—"Go, Sumantra, and bring Rama hither. for the Maharaja has something important to tell him." Sumantra replied :—"How can I go, unless I have the permission of the Maharaja?" Then Dasaratha said in grief :—"O Sumantra, go and bring Rama hither, as Kaikeyi has requested you." And Sumantra went to the palace of Rama and said :—"O Rama, your father Dasaratha and

the Rani Kaikeyi desire your presence. Come without delay." Rama then went out with Sumantra, and Lakshmana followed.

While the whole multitude, filled with joy, were waiting without the palace, Rama beheld his wretched father sitting with Kaikeyi on a couch, his countenance withered with sorrow. Then Rama humbly bowed at the feet of his father and of Kaikeyi ; and the eyes of the Maharaja were overflowing with tears, and he could only exclaim : — "O Rama !" Rama, seeing his father's eyes filled with tears, was seized with fear and bowing to Kaikeyi, said : — "O mother, tell me how I have offended the Maharaja !" Then Kaikeyi, void of shame and relentless as a tigress, replied : — "The Maharaja is not angry, O Rama, nor is he in distress ; but he has something in his mind which he forbears to mention through fear of you, but it is necessary that you should know it. In former times, when I preserved his life in the war between the gods and demons, he offered me two boons and swore to perform them ; and I have now requested that my son Bharata may be installed as associate with the Maharaja and that you may be sent into exile in the wilderness of Dandaka for

fourteen years. If, therefore, you desire that your father should act according to his promise, you will leave the city this day and not return for fourteen years, and you will permit Bharata to govern the Raj."

At this merciless speech, the Maharaja was pierced with grief, but the words of Kaikeyi had no effect upon Rama; they fell upon his mind like sparks of fire upon the ocean waves and he felt no kind of sorrow, but replied :—"So be it! I shall depart into the forest that the Maharaja may fulfil his promise. But why is he distressed? Whatever my father or preceptor may command, that I shall cheerfully perform. Let messengers on swift horses be despatched to bring Bharata from the city of Girivraja, and I shall hasten to the forest of Dandaka and abide there fourteen years." And Kaikeyi said :—"So let it be. Let not your father's shame affect you, but depart immediately, for until you are gone out of the city, your father will neither bathe nor eat." Thus urged by Kaikeyi, Rama said :—"I obey the will of the Maharaja, for there is no act of virtue greater than obeying the command of a father and fulfilling his promises. Bear with me while I take

leave of my mother Kausalya and console my wife Sita, and then I shall this day depart to the wilderness of Dandaka." With these words Rama bowed at the feet of his father who was lying senseless from grief, and also at the feet of Kaikeyi, and went out from the inner apartments, followed by Lakshmana and all his friends. All excepting Rama were bathed in tears, but not even the loss of the Raj or the prospect of weary exile could affect his dignity. Withdrawing his eyes from all the preparations for his installation and the insignia of royalty he manifested neither the slightest change of countenance nor sign of sorrow.

When Rama left the presence of the Maharaja and Kaikeyi, he entered the apartments of his mother Kausalya. On seeing him she arose full of pleasure, and as he bowed to her feet, she embraced him, and kissed him, and said: -- "May you attain the age, the renown and the virtue of the royal sages of old and the merit worthy of the race. O Rama, your father the Maharaja, faithful to his word, will this day install you as his helper in the Raj "

Then Rama with joined hands bowed and said:—"O mother, are you unacquainted with

this heavy calamity now impending? It is Bharata whom the Maharaja will install as his helper, and as for me, I am to go into exile for fourteen years."

When the Rani heard these terrible words, she fell to the earth. Rama raised her up and gently caressed her. At length, in an agony of grief, she said :—"O my son! O Rama! If you had never been born, I should have been saved this bitter sorrow. A barren woman has only the grief of being childless, and knows not what it is to lose a son. Surely my heart is as hard as a rock, since it has not burst ere now. What is life to me? If you go into the wilderness, I too will follow you. But, O Rama, it is not pleasing to me that you should be deprived of the Raj and go into the jungle. The Maharaja is subject to the words of a woman, and has become the slave of Kaikeyi. You, O Rama, have committed no fault that you should be driven into exile; and what son who remembers the duties of a ruler, would regard a sovereign who has sunk into his second childhood? O Rama, before this matter becomes known, do you assume the management of affairs. Who will oppose you?"

Lakshmana then said :—“ O mother, your words are perfectly just : you have spoken what is in my mind. I long to see Rama upon the throne, and should any one come to oppose him, I swear by you and my weapons that he should soon behold the mansions of Yama. So long as I, who am the servant of Rama, am here, who will dare to give the Raj to any one else ?”

But Rama said :—“ I cannot transgress my father's commands ; therefore I entreat your permission to depart to the forest. No one is degraded by obedience to the command of a father.” He then said to Lakshmana :—“ O my brother, the distress of my mother is unmeasurable, but truth is founded on virtue, and virtue consists in obedience to a father. Having engaged to obey my father, I cannot break my promise.”

The wretched Kausalya still implored her son to remain, or else permit her to accompany him ; but Rama would not, and said :—“ The authority of the Maharaja is superior to all other considerations.”

He then took leave of his mother and went to his own apartments. Meanwhile, the beautiful Sita not knowing what had occurred, and rejoicing

in her husband's coming installation, was anxiously awaiting his return. When Rama, with saddened countenance and drooping head, saw his beautiful wife, who was dearer to him than life, he could no longer retain his sorrow. Sita was alarmed and asked him why he was sorrowful. Then Rama told her of the two promises which Dasaratha had made to Kaikeyi, and how Bharata was to be installed in his stead and he himself was doomed to fourteen years' exile in the jungle. And Rama said :—"As the Maharaja has appointed Bharata to be his helper in the Raj, he is to be honoured by you. By the command of my venerable father, I go this day into the forest. It will become you therefore, to devote yourself to vows and fastings and acts of devotion. My aged mother, wasted with grief, demands your respectful attention ; my father's other wives must also be duly honoured by you, according to their rank ; and my two brothers, Lakshmana and Satrughna, should always be regarded by you as your own brothers or sons."

Sita, angry but humble, replied :—"O Rama, what words are these ? A wife must share the fortunes of her husband ; and if you this day depart to the forest, I must go before you and

smooth the thorns. Wherever the husband may be, the wife must dwell in the shadow of his foot. I shall live in the jungle with as much ease as in my father's house, and shall enjoy happiness with you in the honey-scented wood. I have no fear, and I long to roam in the forest with you and see the lakes and rivers, and the flowers and water-birds. I shall be no burden to you, but if you leave me, I shall die."

Then Rama wishing to turn her mind from going with him, told her of the many dangers of the forest and said that as she was dearer to him than his own life and was never used to hardship, he could not allow her to suffer on his account.

But Sita was greatly distressed, and her eyes were filled with tears, and she replied in a low tone :—"O Rama, I am fully aware of all the evils of a forest life, but in your presence all that is evil, will be turned into good. Without you, my life is not worth preserving, but with you, nothing could terrify me. O my lord, by following my husband through affection, I shall be faultless, for the husband is the chief deity of the wife. I can bear anything but separation from you. I entreat you to take me with you. Do

not disappoint me, O Rama." So saying, she fell at his feet and wept bitterly.

At these words Rama could no longer shut his ears to the prayer of Sita. He took her by the hand and wiped away her tears, and spoke to her gently:—"Now that you are determined at heart to go with me, it is not proper for me to leave you behind. Go therefore, and take leave of all your superiors and of the queens."

Then Sita was filled with joy and did as she was bidden. And Lakshmana also came and entreated that he might accompany them into the wilderness, and Rama consented.

Meanwhile the rumour spread throughout the city of Ayodhya, that Rama and Sita and Lakshmana were to be sent into exile; and presently the two Princes and the wife of Rama were seen walking barefoot towards the palace of the Maharaja, Rama walking first and Sita close behind him and Lakshmana last. At this sight the multitude were filled with grief.

Rama approached the apartments of the Maharaja and heard the lamentations of his father and the curses he uttered upon the wicked Kaikeyi. He tried to console his father, saying that when the fourteen years were over, the king

would behold him again. At last the Maharaja ordered that the army and treasures should accompany Rama. But Kaikeyi said that her son Bharata would not accept a Raj stripped of its wealth ; and Rama too refused to take soldiers or treasures, saying :—" Bring hither the raiment of bark, the spade wherewith I may dig for roots, and the basket in which I may carry them ; these will do for me who am to reside fourteen years in the jungle." Then Kaikeyi, devoid of shame, brought herself the dresses of bark and said before all the people :—" Put them on." And the mighty Rama received the bark dress from Kaikeyi and threw off his garment of fine linen and all his ornaments. Lakshmana also, in like manner, put off his elegant and rich dress and put on the habit of an ascetic in the presence of his father. Sita, accustomed only to silken garments, started at the sight of the bark raiment, and Maharaja Dasaratha reproached Kaikeyi, saying :—" () shameless Kaikeyi, you are determined to ruin me ; but answer me one thing. You asked me only for the exile of Rama ; why then do you give the bark raiment to Lakshmana and Sita ? Rama is bound for my sake to wear the garments of an ascetic according to your request ; but Sita and Lakshmana accompany

Rama of their own accord and are not bound to obey your commands."

Then the Maharaja ordered his storekeepers and treasurers to give Sita clothes and ornaments enough for fourteen years ; and the men did as they were commanded, and Sita threw aside the garments of bark and clothed herself in fine attire as before. The Maharaja then said :—
" Bring the chariot and let Rama ride, that he may appear to be going out for pleasure rather than into exile."

Then Rama and Sita and Lakshmana turned to Kausalya to take their leave of her ; and Kausalya said to Rama :— " Sita is unprotected, and Lakshmana is a mere boy. Take care of them in the wilderness, and above all, take care of yourself and never forget me, your unfortunate mother." Here she was choked with grief and could speak no more ; and Rama said to her :—
" Lakshmana is my right hand, and Sita is my shadow ; so have no fear on their account ; for myself, fear nothing, but devote yourself wholly to consoling my father Dasaratha. By your favour, I hope to be successful at last, and to absolve my father from his promise and return again to the Raj."

They then mounted the chariot, and Sumantra climbed into the driving seat and drove the willing steeds with the swiftness of the wind. All the people were in deep affliction and ran after the chariot. The Maharaja, seeing that the city was overwhelmed with sorrow, fell down beneath the affliction, like a tree severed from its roots ; and a loud noise arose behind Rama from the men who supported the Maharaja in his swoon. And Rama looked back and saw his father Dasaratha and his mother Kausalya running after the chariot, and heard them calling upon Sumantra to stop ; but he commanded Sumantra to drive on. So Sumantra drove the impatient horses, and the royal Counsellors said to Dasaratha :—"O Maharaja, no one follows far after him whom they expect to see return. " But the wretched Maharaja, with a sad countenance, stood still with his Rani Kausalya, looking after the chariot as it was driven further and further from his sight.

Now so long as the Maharaja could see his beloved and virtuous son, he raised himself up on the earth to look ; but when he could no longer see the dust of the chariot wheels, he fell again to the earth in the deepest misery ; and Kausalya attended him, holding his right



Dasaratha, Kausalya and Kaikeyi.

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hand, and Kaikeyi followed him on his left side. When the Maharaja saw that Kaikeyi was there, he said to her :—"O Kaikeyi, bent on evil, touch not me ! I wish not to see you, for you are neither my wife nor my friend." Then the Rani Kausalya, wasted with distress, raised the Maharaja from the earth and wiped the dust from him.

Seeing the city bereft of its people, the Maharaja entered the palace and said:—"Carry me at once to the apartments of Kausalya, the mother of Rama, for nowhere else can my heart find ease." Then those who were waiting on the Maharaja carried him to the chamber of Kausalya, and he lay down on a couch and sank into a delirium. And night spread all around, like the night of universal death ; and at midnight, the Maharaja said to Kausalya :--"O Kausalya, I cannot see you ; touch me, I pray you, with your hand, for my sight has gone after Rama."

CHAPTER IX.

Journey to Chitra-kuta.

Now all this while, though the Maharaja had been carried back to the city of Ayodhya, yet the people would not return from following the chariot of Rama ; and when the evening was come, Sumantra halted the chariot on the banks of the river Tamasa. And Rama fixed upon a pleasant lodging, and he and the people that were with him spent the night on the banks of the river ; and at early morning, Rama arose from his bed of leaves, and seeing the people very quiet, said to his brother :—“ O Lakshmana, behold these people devoted to us and inattentive to their own houses, locked in sleep beneath the trees ; these citizens have vowed to bring us back and will never leave us while their lives remain. Let us therefore, gently mount the chariot, while they are sleeping beneath the trees, and depart.” Then at the command of Rama, Sumantra harnessed the horses to the chariot, and Rama and Sita and Lakshmana mounted it and drove on. When the citizens awoke in the morning, they were overwhelmed with sorrow at finding that Rama had departed, and they filled

the air with their lamentations. After a while, they approached the city of Ayodhya, and their grief broke out afresh. No one rejoiced and no one was cheerful.

Meanwhile Rama with Sita, Lakshmana and Sumantra, had crossed the river Tamasa and journeyed far away to Srīngavera which was the border town between the Raj of Kosala and the country of the Bhils; and the Raja of the Bhils was Guha, who was a valiant and renowned chieftain, and a friend to Rama. When Raja Guha heard that Rama had come into his dominions, he went out to meet him with all his kinsmen and welcomed and entertained him hospitably.

Next morning, Guha prepared a strong and shapely boat capable of crossing the Ganges with ease, and Rama took Sumantra by the hand and said to him:—"O Sumantra, enough has been done for me, and we will leave the chariot and go on foot to the great forest. Do you therefore speedily return to Ayodhya and be cautious in the presence of the Maharaja."

After this, Rama and Lakshmana matted their hair with the juice of the fig tree and looked like two venerable sages. They then entered the

boat with Sit aand bade farewell to Sumantra and Guha, who saw them depart with eyes overflowing with tears ; and the boat moved away with the speed of the wind.

After they had crossed the Ganges, they spent the night under a fig tree, and on the morrow they went to Prayag and reached the hermitage of the sage Bharadwaja who received them with hospitality. And the sage desired Rama to dwell in that place rendered pure by the confluence of two great rivers ; but Rama, afraid that the people of Ayodhya would often come thither to see him, would not agree. Then the sage said :- " At a short distance hence, O my Lord, is the Chitra-kuta mountain on which you may reside ; it is prized by sages, and is pure and beautiful to the sight." So the two brothers with Sita crossed the river Jumna in a raft and proceeded towards Chitra-kuta. And they went on until they came to the hermitages on the hill where resided the great Valmiki and other distinguished sages ; and they advanced with joined hands and bowed at the feet of Valmiki ; and the sage, full of joy, returned their salutation and bade them welcome ; and Rama related to Valmiki all that had occurred. Rama then determined to dwell

on the hill of Chitra-kuta ; and at his command, Lakshmana brought various kinds of wood and erected a hut of branches and leaves. Thus having arrived at the pleasant mountain of Chitra-kuta and at the river Mandakini, Rama was filled with joy and was no longer grieved for his exile.

CHAPTER X.

Death of Maharaja Dasaratha.

Meanwhile the charioteer Sumantra returned with a heavy heart to the joyless city of Ayodhya. On entering the palace, he beheld the wretched Maharaja wasted with grief on account of his son ; and he approached and bowed at his feet.

When the Maharaja saw Sumantra, he fell down in a swoon ; and the Rani Kausalya raised him up.

Thus the day declined and the sun set ; and the Maharaja sank into the arms of sleep. And in the middle of the night the Maharaja awoke weeping and terrified, and said to his wife :--“ O Kausalya, I am now dying through grief for my son. My eyes are unable to see you, so come near and touch me. Could Rama once touch me and receive the Raj from me, I might even yet live. O Kausalya, I cannot see you. My eyes and memory are gone. What affliction can exceed this, that when my soul is departing, I cannot behold Rama. O Kausalya, my heart is dying away. I am sinking like the expiring light of a lamp which has been exhausted of its oil.” While thus lamenting, the eyes of Maharaja



Raja Dasaratha on his Death Bed.

(Nanda Lal Basu)

By courtesy of Babu Ramunana Chatterjee,

Dasaratha became fixed in death, and he died in the presence of Kausalya and Sumitra, and the two Ranis swooned away until the morning, and no one knew what had happened.

Now when the night had passed away and the sun risen, every one stood with great respect and attention, waiting for the coming of the Maharaja ; but when he did not appear, they looked with anxiety, one at another. Meanwhile, Kausalya and Sumitra awoke from their heavy slumber, and seeing that the Maharaja was dead, they fell to the earth with loud cries. Then Kaikeyi also came forward and filled the palace with her lamentations. The Ministers hearing that the Maharaja had died during the night, hastened to the chamber of death. But no funeral ceremonies could be performed at that time, for all his four sons were away from the city of Ayodhya. So the Ministers, directed by the Brahmanas, would not burn the royal body, but they placed it in a bath of oil.

Then the Ministers and the Brahmanas assembled and sent swift messengers to bring Bharata and Satrughna to Ayodhya with the utmost speed, but they were ordered not to tell them of the Maharaja's death.

CHAPTER. XI.

Bharata Refuses the Raj.

When the messengers arrived at Girivraja, they told Bharata that Vasistha the priest, as well as all the Counsellors, desired him immediately at Ayodhya. So Bharata took leave of his grandfather and started for Ayodhya with Satrugna. When they arrived at the city, its cheerless appearance filled Bharata with anguish, and he saw ominous signs, and his heart sank within him. Then with a downcast countenance he entered the palace of the Maharaja, but saw him not there. So he went to the apartments of his mother Kaikeyi and kissed her feet, and after replying to her questions about his welfare and that of his grandfather and uncle, said :—" O mother the family of Ikshwaku wears not the face of cheerfulness, and I cannot find the Maharaja. Is he at the house of Rani Kausalya ?" Then Kaikeyi told him the unwelcome news, as though it had been glad tidings. She said :—" That which is the lot of all creatures has befallen your magnanimous father." At these words the pious and pure Bharata instantly fell

to the ground in an agony of grief ; and he wept very bitterly and covered his face with his garment. Kaikeyi raised him up saying :—" O Prince, why are you prostrate ? The pious should not give way to grief." Bharata, filled with sorrow asked :—" O mother, by what sickness was the Maharaja carried away ? Happy are Rama and others who have performed his funeral rites."

Then Kaikeyi told the mournful story as though it had been pleasant news. She said :—" Rama has undertaken a long residence in the jungle and has gone with Sita to the wilderness of Dandaka, and Lakshmana has followed him." Hearing these words, Bharata was greatly alarmed for his brother and concerned for the glory of his family, and he said :—" What ! Has Rama taken away the wealth of a Brahman ? Has he injured a poor man who is worthy and innocent ? Wherefore is he exiled to the wilderness of Dandaka, like one who has killed a Brahman ?" Then Kaikeyi, vainly esteeming herself as able and wise, thus addressed the magnanimous Bharata :—" No Brahman has been deprived of his wealth by Rama, no poor man, worthy and innocent, has been injured by him. But when I heard, my son, that the Maharaja

proposed to install Rama in the Raj, I requested him to give the Raj to you and to send Rama into exile ; and your father, having formerly made me a promise to grant whatever I desired, did according to my request. The renowned Dasaratha has now resigned his breath, and royalty is to be sustained by you. For your sake have I done all this. O my son, this is not a time to grieve ; the city and Raj are now yours ; and when you have performed the funeral rites for the dead Maharaja, you will be quickly installed in the Raj by Vasishtha and the Chiefs of the Brahmanas."

When Bharata heard of the death of his father and the exile of his two brothers, he was deeply afflicted and bitterly reproached his mother, saying :—"What will a Raj avail me who am mortally wounded with grief ? How can I govern the Raj, now that I am deprived of Rama and Lakshmana ? The eldest among the sons of a Raja is ever anointed to the Raj ; so I will bring back Rama, the darling of the people of Ayodhya, from the wilderness of Dandaka."

Meanwhile Satrughna, having been informed of all that had occurred, spoke out his indignation in hot words, when suddenly there appeared at

the eastern gate of the palace the wicked nurse Manthara. Satrughna was then filled with rage and seized her by the neck and threw her upon the ground and dragged her along the earth. At length he dragged her with great fury into the presence of Kaikeyi and poured forth bitter reproaches, and Kaikeyi was filled with terror and fled for safety to her son Bharata. And Bharata said to his brother Sâtrughna :—
“ Among all creatures women are not to be killed. Desist, therefore, I pray you. Restrain your rage, and she will be destroyed by her own deeds. If the pious Rama hears that this deformed creature has been killed, he will never again speak to me or you.” So Satrughna listened to the counsel of Bharata and restrained his anger and released Manthara ; and she went away full of fear and took refuge at the feet of her mistress Kaikeyi.

Bharata and Satrughna then went, afflicted and weeping, to the apartment of the distressed Kausalya and having comforted her, sank down in distress ; and Kausalya embraced them who loved their elder brother, and wept aloud.

CHAPTER XII.

Funeral Rites for the Maharaja.

The next day Bharata performed the funeral ceremonies of the dead Maharaja, and on the twelfth day he performed the Sraddha and offered cakes and other food to the soul of his deceased father and gave abundance of food to the Brahmanas.

CHAPTER XIII.

Bharata's Visit to Rama.

Now, on the fourteenth day, when the mourning was over, a great council was held at Ayodhya, at which Bharata was formally requested to accept the Raj. But he declined the throne, declaring that it belonged of right to Rama and that he would go into the wilderness and install Rama as Raja of Kosala.

Accordingly Bharata and Satrughna commenced their journey to the abode of Rama. Kausalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi also accompanied Bharata, and all the people of the city went out with him to meet Rama.

When Bharata and his followers arrived at Chitra-kuta, he left them at the entrance of the forest and in company with Satrughna and Sumantra proceeded towards the spot where Rama was dwelling. Meanwhile the noise of the army attracted the attention of Rama, and Lakshmana climbing a tree saw a large army and said to Rama :—"O chief of men, this must be the army of Bharata. Being desirous of enjoying the Raj without a rival, he is coming

to destroy us both. I see his flag upon the chariot, the very chariot in which we left Ayodhya. We must certainly kill him, and then you may govern the Raj in peace." Rama replied :—" What evil has Bharata ever done to you, or what fear have you of Bharata, that you desire to kill him ? I have agreed to fulfil my father's promise, and what should I do with the Raj ? Perchance Bharata has been drawn hither by affection only, or he has come to surrender the Raj to me ; and it is improper for you to speak so harshly of him." Thus addressed by his pious brother, Lakshmana was abashed and said :—" Perchance our father the Maharaja has come to see you." Rama, seeing that Lakshmana was ashamed, replied :—" Dasaratha may have come to see us and to take us home again." When Rama and Lakshmana were thus conversing, Bharata entered the hermitage and beholding Rama in the hut of leaves seated on an antelope's skin and dressed in the garb of an ascetic, wept bitterly. Rama embraced him and enquired about his health and then asked why he had come to the forest ; whereupon Bharata said :—" O excellent one, my valiant father, having sent you into exile, has departed to heaven, overwhelmed with grief. O chief of

men, I pray you to accept the Raj, but first arise and perform the rites of water for your father. Satrughna and myself have already offered water. O Rama, you are indeed the beloved of your father ; through grief for you and the yearning to see you, he has departed this life."

At this account of his father's death, Rama sank upon the ground, and when he was revived, he bitterly lamented the death of the Maharaja, and offered oblations to his departed soul.

Then Bharata again offered the Raj to Rama ; but Rama would not agree, because he was determined to obey his father, and said :—" After my return from my exile, I shall be able with this pious Bharata to govern the Raj with honour. The Maharaja will then be discharged from his obligation to Kaikeyi, and his words will have been fulfilled by me."

At last Bharata took a pair of new sandals and turning to Rama requested him to put them on saying :—" O Rama, I will for fourteen years assume the matted hair and the habit of an ascetic and subsist on fruits and roots. Waiting your return, I shall commit the management of the Raj to your sandals and reside without the city : and unless you return to Ayodhya within

five days of the completion of the fourteenth year, I will enter the fire." Then Bharata took leave of Rama and returned to Ayodhya, and having placed the sandals on the throne, governed the Raj in Rama's name.

CHAPTER XIV.

Rama's Exile.

When Bharata had returned to Ayodhya, Rama thought he would be disturbed by constant visits of the people of Ayodhya, so he departed out of Chitra-kuta together with Sita and Lakshmana, and journeyed towards the south until they came to the forest of Dandaka. This forest was full of wild beasts and was the abode of a hideous cannibal named Viradha. This Viradha, seeing Rama and Lakshmana and Sita, ran towards them and seized Sita in his arms and threatened Rama and Lakshmana. Then a fierce battle ensued, and Rama and Lakshmana broke his arms and buried him alive.

The three then continued their journey towards the south, till they arrived at the hermitage of Agastya. There they were entertained by the sage with fruits, roots and flowers, after which he said to Rama :—"Receive, O Rama, this divine bow of Vishnu, adorned with gold and diamonds, the work of Viswakarma ; this

excellent infallible arrow of Brahma, given to me by Indra ; these two quivers of inexhaustible arrows resembling the glowing fire ; and this golden-sheathed scimitar. O Rama, with this bow Vishnu smote innumerable Asuras and obtained the most splendid honours among the gods." The Brahman, having thus given Rama the bow, the arrow, the scimitar and the two quivers, presented him also with an excellent coat of mail which had been given to him by Indra.

After this, Rama and Sita and Lakshmana took their leave and departed out of the hermitage of Agastya and at his instance went their way to Panchavati to fix their dwelling there.

Now on the road from the hermitage of Agastya, Rama and others saw a vulture of enormous size, who said that he was a friend of their father Maharaja Dasaratha ; and this vulture was named Jatayus and was the son of Garura, and his elder brother was named Sampati. And Jatayus said to Rama :—" When you, O beloved one, are gone abroad with Lakshmana, I will guard Sita." And Rama accepted his friendship and embraced him with great joy, and he accompanied Rama on his way to Panchavati.

When they arrived at the spot pointed out by Agastya, Rama said to Lakshmana :—" O excellent one, this is the flowery forest of Panchavati. Let a place for a hermitage be sought in some pleasant thicket, near a pool or sheet of water, where sacrificial wood and flowers and kusagrass and water may be easily procured." Then Rama showed his brother a beautiful spot facing the river Godavari ; and there was a sheet of water near it, as bright as the sun and fragrant with lilies ; and in the distance were high mountains abounding with glens and vocal with peacocks. In this charming neighbourhood Lakshmana built a large hut on a high floor of earth, with firm posts of bamboos wrought together with wicker-work ; and he covered it and roofed it with branches of trees and tied it with strong cords and thatched it with grass and leaves ; and he divided it into four rooms. When he had thus finished the dwelling-house of Rama, he went down to the Godavari and bathed and then returned, bringing fruits and water-lilies ; and he made an oblation of flowers to the god of dwellings and sprinkled water as was proper to secure peace for the new habitation and remove all evil from it. After this he showed the hermitage to Rama ; and Rama

and Sita saw the excellent habitation and entered it with delight ; and the pious Rama dwelt in that fruitful country in perfect happiness.

In this manner thirteen years and a half of Rama's exile passed away happily.

Thus Rama dwelt in his hermitage of Panchavati with his wife and brother ; and Jatayus, the Chief of vultures, also dwelt there. But at this time Jatayus asked permission to return to his own abode, saying :—" After visiting all my friends, O chief of men, I will return." So Rama permitted him to take his leave, and the Chief of vultures departed from the hermitage.

CHAPTER XV.

Rama's Wars Respecting Surpa-nakha.

Now one day while Rama was sitting in his pleasant abode talking with Sita, a certain female Rakshasi happened to come to the hermitage. Her name was Surpa-nakha, and she was sister of the ten-headed Ravana, the mighty Raja of Lanka ; and her two brothers were Khara and Dushana ; and these two were mighty chieftains and had been appointed by Raja Ravana to rule all that country. This woman Surpa-nakha approached the leafy hut and saw Rama's resplendent countenance ; and he appeared like a god in heaven, and his eyes resembled the lotus, and he was like a great Raja, bearing all the marks of royalty ; and his cheeks were green as the new grass, and he was captivating as the god of love. Seeing Rama, the heart of the Rakshasi was smitten with love, and assuming a beautiful form, she approached and thus addressed him :—" O ascetic, why are you come bearing a bow and arrow and accompanied by your wife to this place which is haunted by the Rakshasas ? I presume that the

sages on the banks of the Godavari, who are as bright as flame, trust in the strength of your arm." Rama replied with utmost simplicity, for never did he utter a falsehood :—"There was a Raja named Dasaratha. I am his eldest son, known among men by the name of Rama. Yonder is my younger brother Lakshmana who is devoted to me, and this is my wife Sita. At the command of my father and mother, bound by a vow and desirous of fulfilling my duty, I am come to dwell in the woods ; why do you in the bloom of youth and beauty, as charming as Lakshmi, wander about without fear in this dreadful forest of Dandaka ?" To these words Surpa-nakha replied :—"O Rama, I am a female Rakshasi, and my name is Surpa-nakha, and I can assume any form at will. Ravana is my brother, of whom you may have heard ; my other brothers are Vibhishana the virtuous, Kumbha-karna the sleepy and the two mighty heroes, Khara and Dushana. I left my brothers, O Rama, when I first saw you ; through desire I have come to you, O my husband. Become my husband by a lasting union. What occasion have you for Sita ? She is deformed and ugly and not a fit match for you. But I am a wife worthy of you, clothed in beauty and possessed

of every accomplishment. Behold me, charming in face, adorned with glorious ornaments and shapely. I will eat this unchaste creature and then devour your second brother. O my husband, with me you shall wander through the wilderness of Dandaka and view the lofty mountain-peaks and the green woods."

Having heard the words of Surpa-nakha, Rama in jest smilingly replied in smooth and gentle words :—" O Surpa-nakha, I am already married ; this is my beloved wife and the presence of a rival wife would be painful to one like you. But, O charming woman, my younger brother Lakshmana is youthful and engaging ; he is intelligent, beautiful, fortunate and heroic ; he is a fit match for you and will become your husband. O full-eyed one, wait upon my brother as your husband, who has no rival wife."

Thus addressed by Rama, the infatuated Rakshasi left the hut and immediately addressed Lakshmana thus :—" I am very beautiful and a fit wife for you ; come and roam with me at your ease in the forest of Dandaka." Lakshmana replied with a smile :—" How can you desire to become a slave, the wife of a slave like me ? O delicate fair one, I am the property of another,

even of this my excellent brother Rama. O full-eyed one, you should aspire to a higher station. Become the wife of my brother in whom is to be found every accomplishment. He will abandon his present wife and devote all his attention to you."

Surpa-nakha, thinking that Lakshmana was serious, began to smile with studied art and again addressed Rama :—" Do you prefer Sita to me? I will instantly devour her in your sight, and then I will roam the forest with you without a rival." Surpa-nakha then rushed towards Sita in her rage, with eyes glaring like burning coals, when Rama repelled her and said to Lakshmana :—" O brother, it is not always proper to jest with those who are cruel and base. See Sita is nearly dead! O excellent one, disfigure this ugly Rakshasi."

The valiant Lakshmana then rose in anger and seized his scimitar and cut off the ears and nose of Surpa-nakha. Disfigured by the loss, the dreadful Rakshasi uttered a horrid shriek and ran into the wood. Smeared with blood, she threw out her arms and howled like the roaring of the clouds in the rainy season. In this state she hastened to her brother Khara,

who was surrounded by a multitude of Rakshasas, and at length she fell upon the ground.

When Khara saw his sister smeared with blood and fainting on the earth, he exclaimed in great wrath :—" Arise and tell me plainly who has done this. Who is there, who, even in sport, would vex with his finger's end a black serpent full of venom ? Who would take the rope of death and bind it round his neck ?"

At these words Surpa-nakha, in great grief, thus related the cause of her disaster :—" There are two brothers, Rama and Lakshmana, who are clothed in the garb of ascetics and feed on fruits and roots, and between them I beheld a beautiful young woman ; by these two brothers have I thus been treated for the sake of that woman. I long to drink the frothing blood of that human female and of these two brothers ; and I pray you to accomplish my grand wish."

Then Khara cried aloud in a voice of thunder :—" Wipe away your tears and shake off your terror ! This day I will send Rama and his brother to the abode of Yama. This day you shall drink the blood of this feeble mortal Rama." Then Khara and his brother

Dushana led a mighty army of Rakshasas against the hermitage of Rama. The vast army poured down swiftly upon Rama like the raging sea ; but Rama stood still with a smiling countenance, filling the heavens with the loud twanging of his bow string. Then Khara assailed Rama with a thousand arrows, while all the Rakshasas poured on the dread-inspiring archer a mighty shower of iron clubs, javelins, darts, scimitars and battle-axes ; and Rama was surrounded by Rakshasas of horrid aspect, but he received all the arrows of the Rakshasas as the sea receives all the rivers ; and although wounded by their dreadful shafts, the hero felt no pain.

Like a huge mountain pierced with many flaming thunderbolts, Rama stood with his body streaming with blood but shining like the evening sun surrounded by fiery clouds. At length, filled with anger, he drew his bow even to a circle and discharged keen arrows by thousands. The fatal shafts, dreadful as the snare of death, were discharged by Rama, as easily as in sport, and pierced the bodies of the Rakshasas. They wounded by the sharp burning bolts, uttered fearful yells, which reached the sky ; and they found no more mercy from the heart-piercing

arrows of Rama, than a dry forest receives from a merciless fire.

Then Dushana, foaming with rage, led them on to another attack and they discharged thousands of arrows and trees and large stones at the dauntless Rama ; and the tumult of that dreadful battle made the hair of men stand erect from fear. Then Rama uttered a tremendous shout, and fitted to his bow a brightly shining weapon named Gandharva, at which a thousand arrows flew from his welldrawn bow. The sun was shrouded by those arrows and the air was darkened ; whilst the earth was covered with wounded Rakshasas and fallen weapons. The exhausted, the wounded and the mangled were scattered in thousands, and the few remaining Rakshasas fled in misery before the conquering Rama.

After this the weakened remnant of the Rakshasas again put their trust in Khara and Dushana and rose in battle a third time against Rama. The mighty hero, humble but steadfast in mind, once more stood against the haughty few who still urged the fight. Then with his arrows he cut asunder the great bow of Dushana and slew the horses that were harnessed to his chariot ; and with three more arrows he smote Dushana

on the breast and took off the head of his charioteer. Then Dushana seized a club and flew at Rama, but Rama cut off both his hands ; and Dushana, deprived of his club, fell to the ground and was instantly killed by the heroic Rama.

Then Khara, seeing his brother slain, rushed towards Rama and discharged flaming arrows, but Rama stopped them with his own shafts. Khara in his own chariot then approached Rama; but Rama seized the bow of Vishnu, which had been given by Agastya, and discharged innumerable arrows, and broke the chariot of Khara and killed his horses and charioteer. Khara then leaped forward with a mighty club in his hand, and hurled it at Rama like a flaming thunderbolt; but Rama turned it back again and fought with Khara for the last time and discharged a flaming arrow which pierced his mail armour even to the bone ; and Khara fell upon the earth burnt up as with fire and gave up his life. And Lakshmana and Sita came out of the cave, and Sita embraced her husband with great joy ; and Rama embraced the fawn-eyed Sita and appeared among the adoring sages as glorious as Indra in heaven.

Now a certain Rakshasa escaped from the dreadful battle and hastened to Lanka and told

the melancholy tidings to the ten-headed Ravana. Then the eyes of Ravana were red with anger, and hearing that his two brothers, Khara and Dushana, had been killed by Rama, he said :—
“ I will go myself and kill Rama and Lakshmana.”
And the Rakshasa replied :—“ O ten-headed one, Rama can no more be overcome by you in battle, nor by the world of Rakshasas, than heaven can be obtained by sinful men. Not all the gods and Asuras united can accomplish his death. But listen to my plan for his destruction. He has a beautiful wife named Sita ; carry off this beautiful woman, and Rama will be crushed in the great forest, for he cannot exist without Sita.”

Ravana was pleased with this counsel, and said :—“ Tomorrow I will go with my charioteer, and bring Sita to this city.” Then Ravana mounted his chariot as splendid as the sun, and went to the dwelling of Maricha who was his minister, and told him all that the Rakshasa had said ; and he entreated Maricha to counsel him concerning the carrying away of the wife of Rama. Maricha however replied :—“What enemy in the guise of a friend has mentioned Sita to you? The man who has thus stirred you up is undoubtedly your bitterest foe. O Ravana, Rama is a furious

elephant inebriated with energy ; his tusks are full grown ; he is the fierce man-lion destroying the wounded Rakshasas, as though they were trembling deer. O Ravana, rouse not this sleeping lion whose body is full of arrows and whose teeth are sharpened scimitars. Return in peace to Lanka and enjoy yourself among your own wives and let Rama enjoy his wife in the forest." So the ten-headed Ravana listened to the words of Maricha and returned to his stately palace at Lanka.

CHAPTER XVI.

Ravana's Abduction of Sita.

Now when Surpa-nakha, the sister of Ravana, saw that her brothers, Khara and Dushana, and the mighty army of Rakshasas had been slain by the single mortal Rama. she hastened to Lanka, and beheld Ravana seated in front of his palace upon a throne of gold, and she approached him flaming with rage ; and with wide-stretched fiery eyes and a dejected countenance and mad with fear and terror, she roared out these dread words :—“ Intoxicated with the pleasure of sense, you disregard the dreadful danger which has arisen. The Raja who is devoted to his lusts, even though lord of the world, is detested by his subjects. The Raja who does not duly attend to his own affairs, will perish together with his Raj. Know you not that Khara and Dushana have been slain by the single mortal Rama? Know you not that Rama has become the saviour of the sages and has rendered the forest of Dandaka secure from the Rakshasas? O Ravana, you can discern nothing, since you have not learned from your spies of the terrible slaughter of the Rakshasas.”

Sitting among his courtiers, Ravana was enraged at these abusive speeches of Surpa-nakha and cried out :—" Who is Rama?" Surpa-nakha replied :—" Rama, the son of Dasaratha, is the chief of all those who wear the garb of ascetics ; he is equal in form to Kama ; he carries a bow like a rainbow and discharges blazing iron arrows as fatal as poisonous serpents. I saw not the valiant Rama draw his bow, but I saw the army falling by his arrows, as a full crop of corn is smitten by the rains sent by Indra. O Ravana, this Rama has a beautiful wife of charming face and slender and delicate form and cheeks as bright as molten gold. O Ravana, it was because I wanted to bring away this beautiful woman to become your wife, that my nose and ears were cut off by the cruel Lakshmana. O Raja of the Rakshasas, revenge the Rakshasas, revenge the death of your brothers upon Rama and Lakshmana and take the beautiful Sita to be your wife."

Having heard these dread words of his sister Surpa-nakha, Ravana ordered his chariot, and again went to the abode of Maricha. And Ravana said :—" O Maricha, I am distressed and you are my great refuge. That contemptible

Rama, the meanest of the Kshatriyas expelled by his father, has been the slaughterer of my army. This tame and ignorant fellow has a wife named Sita who is in the prime of youth and beauty. Her I will bring away this day, and you must be my helper. Assume the shape of a golden deer spotted with silver and go to the hermitage of Rama and Lakshmana; and when you have drawn the brothers away from the hermitage, I will carry off Sita through the air, as Rahu takes away the light of the moon."

Hearing these words about Rama, the countenance of Maricha became withered, and he licked his parched lips and stared with fixed eyes at Ravana; and he spoke with joined hands, as follows :—"O Raja of the Rakshasas, you have been deceived. Rama is magnanimous and highly renowned; he was not abandoned by his father nor ever disgraced: he is not covetous, nor evilly disposed, nor a mean Kshatriya; his subjects were not in distress, nor were the Brahmanas averse from him. How can you desire to carry off his wife Sita, whose virtue is her preservation? If you carry away the wife of Rama, your destruction is certain."

When Ravana heard these words, he despised

the wise reasoning of Maricha, as one who is desirous of death, refuses medicine. Considering Maricha as one giving ill counsel, Ravana, impelled by his fate, contemptuously replied:—“Why, Maricha, do you speak these silly things to me? Your speech is as useless as seed sown upon salt. I cannot be affrighted by your words. I cannot fear Rama. The sovereign of the world is not to be contradicted but to be addressed in gentle and pleasing language. I did not ask you, O Rakshasa, respecting the good or evil of the undertaking, nor about my own ability, but I asked your assistance only. Assuming the form of a golden deer with silver spots, go and gambol where Sita may see you. After performing this service, go where you will; and I will give you the half of my Raj.”

Maricha was sorely perplexed at the commands of Ravana, for he knew that his death was near; and he sighed repeatedly and said:—“I will go, but I shall be slain; nor will you, O Ravana, return alive!”

Ravana and Maricha then mounted the chariot which was like a palace, and flew through the air, until they came to the wilderness of Dandaka, where stood the hermitage of Rama.



Sita and the Golden Deer

(Ravi Varma)

By courtesy of Messrs. U. Roy & Sons.

There the Raja of the Rakshasas alighted with Maricha from the gold decked chariot and looked round and took Maricha by the hand and said :—“ Here is the hermitage of Rama surrounded by plantain trees. O my companion, speedily do that for which we came hither.” At these words of Ravana, Maricha took the shape of a deer and went to the door of the hut ; and his horns were tipped with sapphire, his face was variegated with black and white, his mouth resembled the red lotus and his azure eyes were like blue water lilies. In this captivating form, adorned with various jewels and grazing at its own will, the silver-spotted deer cropped the tender shoots of the trees and at length entered the plantain grove to attract the eye of Sita.

Now while this deer was grazing and gambolling near the hut, the charming-eyed Sita, eager to pluck flowers, went forth among the trees. There she beheld that deer covered with fine hair and adorned with jewels and bespangled with pearls, its sides shewing gold and silver beautifully intermingled. Then Sita was filled with surprise and repeatedly called to Rama ;—“ Come, my beloved, and behold this golden deer with many-coloured sides. I long to rest at ease

on its golden skin." Then Rama was highly pleased and said to his brother :—" See, O Lakshmana, the strong desire of Sita for this deer-skin. Take care of Sita, while I go and shoot it with an arrow ; then I shall speedily bring its skin hither ; do not leave home until I return." The ardent hero then threw his golden bow over his shoulder, but Lakshmana, thinking deeply, said to him :—" It was formerly told us by the sages that Maricha, the mighty Rakshasa, who assumes illusive forms, sometimes assumes that of a deer ; and in this form he has slain many princes. O Rama, consider whether a deer exists made of gold, with horns of coral and eyes of gems ! I believe this to be a snare or a Rakshasa in the form of a deer." But Sita continued to pray Rama to bring the lovely deer, and he was equally eager to shoot it ; so taking his bow and quivers he went forth into the jungle.

When Rama approached the deer, it bounded forwards, and sometimes it appeared before his eyes, and then it retired to different parts of the wood, until it had drawn him far from the hermitage. After a long time, Rama discharged a deadly arrow which pierced the heart of the deer-shaped Maricha, who then cried out with a voice

resembling that of Rama :—“O Sita, save me ! O Lakshmana, save me !” With these words Maricha expired, and Rama, perceiving the illusion, exclaimed :—“I have killed Maricha !” Then he took the beautiful skin from the body of the deer and remembering what Lakshmana had said and pondering over the last words of the Rakshasa, was alarmed and returned in all haste to the hermitage.

Meanwhile Sita had heard the voice of Maricha in the forest, like the voice of Rama, and said to Lakshmana :—“Go and find out how it is with Rama. I have heard the piercing sound of his cry and you should save your elder brother. Run quickly to Rama who craves succour and who lies in the power of the Rakshasas, like a bull among lions.” Thus addressed, Lakshmana forbore to go and said :—“Why, O Devi, are you thus distressed ? My elder brother cannot be vanquished by the three worlds ; the Rakshasa cannot hurt even his little finger.” Then Sita was filled with anger and exclaimed :—“O Lakshmana, you are the enemy of your brother, if you run not to his assistance. Surely you must be pleased with your brother’s distress, or you would not stand here so carelessly. Is it for my sake

that disregarding my words, you desire the death of Rama? Know, O hero, that I will not survive the death of Rama an instant; why then do you hesitate to go in quest of him?" To Sita, suffused with tears and timid as a doe, Lakshmana replied:—"O Devi, there is no need of fear for Rama; he is invulnerable in battle. O Sita, it ill becomes you to speak to me thus: you are a charge committed to my care by the faithful and magnanimous Rama, and I cannot leave you. It was not the voice of Rama that you heard, but the voice of some hostile Rakshasa. Were his danger ever so imminent, Rama would never utter accents so despicable and so unworthy of him." Sita replied, her eyes reddened with rage, "You cruel wretch, do you aspire to obtain me for yourself? Have you followed Rama into the jungle for my sake, or as a secret spy from Bharata? But I tell you that I will never leave my husband Rama nor desire another man; I will enter the blazing fire, but not even with my foot will I touch any man beside Rama," Sita then began to beat her breast with both hands, when Lakshmana, filled with agitation, thus replied with joined hands:—"O Sita, I cannot reply to you who are my deity. Such language from a woman is not surprising, for women are



Sita giving alms to Ravana.

(Mahadeva Biswanath Dhurandhar)

[By courtesy of Babu Ramananda Chatterjee

regardless of what is right and often rouse discord between brothers. O Sita, your words are like red-hot iron in my ears." Then repenting of this harsh language, he said :—" O beauteous one, I will go to Rama. May good attend you, and all the gods protect you. I tremble at the necessity to which I am reduced. When I return may I see you with Rama !" Then he bowed at her feet and went out in the forest to seek Rama,

When both Rama and Lakshmana had thus been drawn away from Sita, the wicked Ravana left his chariot and taking the form of a mendicant, went quickly towards the hermitage. Seeing Ravana in the guise of a Brahman, Sita showed him every respect and received him with the welcome due to a stranger. Then the wicked Rakshasa, intoxicated with evil desire, approached and seized her. With flaming eyes and bending his frightful brows, he grasped the lotus-eyed Sita by her hair whilst she cried out :—" O Rama ! O Lakshmana ! save me !" Then that wicked wretch mounted with her into the air and seized her by the hand and placed her on his chariot near by and carried her away. Meanwhile Sita cried out, like one distracted,

for Rama and Lakshmana ; and threatened death to the evil-minded Ravana.

At this time the mighty Jatayus, the Chief of vultures, lay asleep on the beautiful peak of the mountain, and the cries of Sita reached his ears, as though he had heard sounds in a dream, and they rent his heart like the stroke of a thunder-bolt. Instantly arousing himself, he heard the noise of Ravana's chariot more terrible than the rolling of thunder ; and he looked around him and cast his eyes towards the heavens and presently beheld Ravana carrying away Sita in his chariot and heard Sita weeping aloud. Then Jatayus was filled with rage and soared into the air, and he stopped the chariot of the furious Ravana.

Then a mighty conflict ensued between Jatayus and Ravana. At length the ten-headed one set Sita upon the ground and belaboured Jatayus with his fists for a full hour, and then cut off his wings and feet with a scimitar, and the valiant Bird fell upon the earth mortally wounded. Seeing his enemy bathed in blood and nearly dead, Ravana again approached Sita, seized her by her black locks and again mounted in the air.

RAVANA'S ABDUCTION OF SITA.

Then Sita cried out :—"O my beloved husband, where are you ? Your wife is being carried off by a Rakshasa, and why are you so cruel as to abandon her ? If you do not destroy this wicked Rakshasa, it will ever be a stain upon your family and race. Where are you also, O Lakshmana, the brother of my husband ? If you are offended at my bitter words in sending you after Rama, I pray your forgiveness and implore you to deliver me from this Rakshasa !" Then turning to Ravana, she again wrathfully reproached him :—"You pride yourself upon being a valiant hero, but you have acted like a mean coward. Think not however to save yourself by flight, for rest assured that wherever you go, you must fall by the hand of Rama. Your end is fast approaching, and the day is not far distant when you will be sent to the mansions of Yama and endure everlasting misery."

Whilst Sita was thus filling the air with her cries and lamentations, Ravana approached the mountain named Rishya-mukha ; and Sita beheld five Monkeys seated upon the mountain, and she thought in her heart that she would throw her ornaments down amongst the Monkeys, in the hope that they might find their way to Rama.

So unknown to Ravana she threw out all her ornaments except the jewelled flower upon her head ; and they dropped down to the earth like falling stars ; and she threw out her veil in like manner. And the five Monkeys saw what was taking place and said one to the other :—" This is the mighty Ravana who is carrying away by force some beautiful woman, and her lamentations can be heard on this mountain. She is calling out the names of Rama and Lakshmana, and she is throwing down her ornaments and garments that we may take care of them and give them to those who shall come in search of her. Be it so or not, we shall keep the things until we shall hear more of this matter." So the Monkeys hid the ornaments and the veil in the valley.

Meanwhile the wicked Ravana had crossed the ocean and descended with Sita upon the island of Lanka ; and he conducted her into his magnificent palace and into one of the inner apartments. He then called for a number of female Rakshasis and commanded them to attend upon Sita night and day ; and to allow no man to enter her apartments save himself ; and to procure her every thing she might desire ; and



Sita as a captive in Lanka.

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never to say an unkind word to her upon pain of death. Ravana then went out and sent for eight of his bravest Rakshasas and told them of his enmity against Rama ; and he commanded them to go forth and be spies upon Rama and Lakshmana and to put them to death by any means in their power, but to bring him with all speed the news if Rama attempted to avenge his wrongs.

Then Ravana returned to Sita and caressed her and asked her to become his wife, but Sita wrathfully and threateningly refused to listen to him. Then Ravana was angered and ordered the female attendants to conduct Sita to the Asoka garden and to use means to induce her to yield. But Sita shut her ears to all entreaties. Her every thought was fixed upon her beloved Rama, and none of the words of the Rakshasis entered her ears. She would not sleep nor eat ; her beautiful form wasted away, and her golden colour became dark ; and she passed her days and nights in tears for Rama.

CHAPTER XVII.

Rama's Search for Sita.

Meanwhile the mighty hero Rama had returned towards his hermitage after killing the deer-like Maricha, and he carried the skin upon his shoulders to present it to Sita. Presently Lakshmana appeared with a sad countenance and told him why he had left Sita alone in the hut. And Rama became greatly alarmed and ran with all speed to the hut, and his brother followed him ; and when they came to the hut, they found that it was empty, and that Sita had gone they knew not where. At this sight Rama became speechless ; his bow dropped from his hand, his hair became dishevelled, his girdle became loosened, and he sank upon the earth in a swoon. Lakshmana caught him in his arms and fanned him with branches of new leaves and splashed his face with water ; and after a while he regained his senses and cried out for Sita.

Then Rama and Lakshmana both rose up and went throughout the forest to search for the lost one ; but they found her not, and they

returned in great grief and passed the whole of that night in the desolate hermitage.

Early next morning Rama and Lakshmana performed their customary devotions and then went forth again in search of Sita ; and after a while they came to the place where Jatayus, Chief of vultures, had fought against Ravana.

And there they discovered the body of the dying Jatayus, who described how Sita had been carried away by the wicked Ravana towards the south and how in attempting to rescue her he had been mutilated and wounded by Ravana. Presently Jatayus died, and Rama and Lakshmana performed his funeral rites.

When the day was far spent, and night was drawing on, the two brothers returned to the hermitage ; but Rama passed the night in lamentations.

When the morning had dawned, and the customary devotions had been performed, Rama and Lakshmana departed out of the hermitage and went towards the south, and after travelling for sometime in the jungle, they at last came within sight of the lake Pampa. That beautiful lake was a mile round, and the water was transparent and covered with the lotus blossoms ;

and ducks and geese were playing upon the surface and bees were hovering over the lotuses ; and water birds of radiant plumage crowded the lake and the green margin around it. And the banks on all sides were covered with trees and laden with fruits and flowers which waved to and fro with the gentle wind and spread a delicious perfume around. But as Rama beheld the beauty of the place, he was reminded more and more of his beloved Sita, and his loss lay heavy upon his soul. And Lakshmana prepared for his brother a bed of lotuses under the shade of a fig tree and brought water for his feet. Then Rama threw himself down upon the bed, and Lakshmana seated himself near him and began to caress the feet of his elder brother.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Rama's Alliance with the Monkeys.

After Rama and Lakshmana had passed the night on the banks of the Pampa lake, they rose early in the morning and performed their customary ablutions and devotions and went to the mountain Rishya-mukha, where dwelt the Monkey Raja, Sugriva, who had been dethroned by his brother Bali, and compelled to take refuge in the mountain. Meanwhile Sugriva and his Monkey Counsellors were sitting on a bastion of a fort on the top of the mountain ; and they beheld the approach of Rama and Lakshmana. And Sugriva turned towards his Counsellors and said :—" Behold, two persons are approaching from the direction of Pampa, who are apparelled as ascetics, but yet appear to carry arms. I fear they are spies who have been sent hither by my brother Bali." But Hanuman who was the chief of his Counsellors said :—" Be of good cheer, O Sugriva, for these men are the sons of a Raja and have come for our deliverance." And Hanuman descended from the mountain and brought Rama and

Lakshmana into the presence of Sugriva. And when Rama had told his story, Hanuman brought some pieces of wood and kindled a fire ; and Rama and Sugriva confirmed their friendship before the fire in the presence of all the Monkeys. And when they were all seated, Sugriva said to Rama :—" Sometime ago, when I was sitting with my Counsellors upon this mountain, I beheld a woman in the air who was being carried off by Ravana, and as she passed by, she threw down her ornaments, and we have kept them to this day." Sugriva then laid them before Rama. Rama clasped the ornaments to his heart and wept aloud ; and Sugriva consoled him saying :—" Now that we have made friendship between us, vex not yourself about Sita. Be assured that you shall soon rescue her."

When Rama had somewhat recovered, he requested Sugriva to relate the story of his misfortunes. Sugriva replied :—" O Rama, I have an elder brother named Bali, who has deprived me of my Raj and taken away my wife Ruma ; and now he seeks to take away my life ; and through fear of him I have taken refuge in this mountain. O Rama, I pray you to free

me from this oppression." Rama said :—" My friend, cast aside all fear of Bali. I promise to make you free. Bali now dwells in your city of Kishkindhya. Put on your war dress and journey to Kishkindhya ; go to the gate of the palace and challenge Bali to a single combat ; and as soon as he comes out against you, I will slay him with my arms."

After this Sugriva set out for the city of Kishkindhya, accompanied by Rama and Lakshmana ; and whilst the two brothers concealed themselves in the forest hard by, he went forward to the gate of the palace to challenge Bali. And Sugriva shouted with a voice like thunder ; and Bali came out with all haste from the inner apartments and saw that it was his brother Sugriva who had challenged him to battle. Now Tara, the wife of Bali, sought to prevent her husband from going out to Sugriva ; but Bali would not listen to her ; and he went out to the palace gate and abused Sugriva, and Sugriva abused him in return and cried out :—" Vishnu is my protector, and you will fall by my hand this day." And Bali and Sugriva fought lustily against each other for a long while, and the battle went against Sugriva and he fell down and

Bali sat upon his breast. Meanwhile Rama saw that Bali had gained the victory, and he discharged an arrow at Bali and pierced his heart, so that he fell senseless upon the ground. Rama and Lakshmana then came up, and Sugriva rose in great joy at seeing his enemy prostrate upon the ground.

Now when Bali was dead, it was agreed that Sugriva should be installed as Raja of Kishkindhya, and that Bali's son Angada should be installed as Yuvaraja. At this time the rainy season had commenced, when even the merchants stay at home and go not to foreign countries ; and Rama begged Sugriva to rest until the rains were over, and then to join in the search for Sita. So Sugriva was installed as Raja and Angada as Yuvaraja ; and Rama and Lakshmana departed from that place and dwelt in the Malyavan mountain.

CHAPTER XIX.

Rama's Invasion of Lanka.

After this, at an auspicious moment, Rama and Sugriva set out for the sea-shore with an innumerable array of Monkeys and Bears ; and Hanuman carried Rama on his shoulders, and Angada carried Lakshmana in like manner ; and they soon reached the ocean and encamped in leaf huts and began to consider how to cross the sea and reach the island of Lanka.

Meanwhile Nikasha, the mother of Ravana, began to see ill omens on every side ; and she was sorely troubled ; and she sent for her other son Vibhishana and begged him to advise Ravana to restore Sita to her husband. And Vibhishana proceeded to the Council Chamber and spoke aloud to Ravana before all his Counsellors ; but Ravana was wroth and abused him sorely and commanded him to depart out of Lanka. So Vibhishana returned to his house and took leave of his wife Sarama and directed her to attend upon Sita and serve her as a slave. He then left Lanka and went to the camp of

Rama ; and four chief men of the city went with him. And when Rama saw the men and learned who they were, he ordered a pot of water to be brought from the sea, and he vowed friendship with Vibhishna ; and he took the water and poured it upon his head declared him Raja of Lanka in the place of his brother Ravana.

After this Rama called together a Council to consider how they should cross the ocean and reach the island of Lanka ; and he invoked the God Varuna, the regent of the waters ; and Varuna entered the Council and directed that a bridge should be built over the sea. He said :—
“ There is a Monkey in your army named Nala ; he is the son of Viswakarma, and whatsoever stone he touches will float upon the water.”
Then Rama rejoiced and directed Sugriva to order Nala to build the bridge ; and at an auspicious moment the great work was commenced by Nala. And the Monkeys filled the air with their shouts and incessantly called out the name of Rama ; and they brought trees, mountains, stones and other things and gave them all to Nala ; and Nala threw them into the sea ; by virtue of his touch all the stones floated upon the waves, as though they had been boats. And the news was

carried to Ravana that Rama was building a bridge of stones which floated on the water as though they were planks ; and Ravana called together his Counsellors, but they bade him fear nothing, for even if Rama crossed to Lanka, he would fall in battle. Meanwhile the bridge progressed day by day and on the last day of the month it touched the shore of Lanka.

Then Rama worshipped the great god Siva who is the helper in all difficult undertakings, and he made a Linga and worshipped it and poured offerings over it ; and when he was about to throw it into the water, the gods came down from heaven and stood before him and besought him to permit it to stay where it was, that they might worship it every day. And this Linga remains to this day and is named Rameswara which signifies " the Lord of Rama " Then in an auspicious moment, Rama and Sugriva, with all the army of Monkeys and Bears, crossed the ocean upon the bridge which Nala had made, and encamped in the island of Lanka near the Subala mountain.

Now when Ravana heard that Rama and all his Monkey army had crossed the ocean and encamped without the city of Lanka, he sent for

two of his Ministers, Suka and Sarana, and desired them to assume the shape of Monkeys and to spy upon the army of Rama and bring him word as to the names and characters of his chief heroes and counsellors. And Suka and Sarana did as they were commanded, but when they joined the army of Monkeys they were seized as spies and carried into the presence of Rama. But Rama said to the two spies :—" Go and count my armies and learn what you will of my commanders and counsellors : and then return and tell all to Ravana and say that I will reduce his city of Lanka to a heap of ashes and slaughter him and all his sons and kinsmen, so that not a single one shall be left alive to offer the cake and water to his departed soul." So Suka and Sarana were shown all the armies of Rama and saw that the commanders of the Monkeys and Bears were warriors of great might and skill ; and they marvelled exceedingly and went back to the city and informed Ravana of all that they had seen and heard.

At that time Ravana was seated in pomp and magnificence on a throne studded with precious stones. When he heard Rama's message, he bit his lips and gnashed his teeth and

said :—" Not though all the world come out to fight against me, will I ever restore Sita to Rama." He then rose up and went to the roof of his palace and saw all the armies of Monkeys encamped before his city ; and Suka and Sarana pointed out to him the different armies and told him the names of all their Commanders ; and when he saw his younger brother Vibhishana standing beside Rama, he was filled with wrath. Then Suka counselled Ravana to restore Sita and make peace with Rama ; but the eyes of Ravana flashed fire, and he said :—" I would have killed you upon the spot but for your long services. Depart from Lanka and go wheresoever you please." So Suka set off for the jungle, and passed the remainder of his life as an ascetic.

After this, Ravana entered his Council-hall and was informed by his Counsellors that Rama was preparing to attack Lanka ; and he immediately sent for Prahasta, his Commander-in-chief, and told him to make ready the army of Rakshasas and to pay the soldiers whatever was due to them and to collect all the supplies necessary for the war. Then the bugle was sounded, and all the Rakshasa soldiers came

before Ravana and bowed their heads to receive his commands. At this moment Nikasha, the mother of Ravana, entered the Council-hall ; and Ravana rose up and paid her every respect and gave her his own seat and bowed down to her and stood before her with joined hands. Then Nikasha said to him :—" O my beloved son, why have you determined to ruin your Raj for the sake of a woman ? You have hundreds of women at your disposal ; why do you cast them aside for the sake of a single female ? I pray you to restore Sita to Rama and conclude a treaty with Rama and tranquillize my mind."

When Nikasha had finished speaking, her father Malyavan came forward and spoke as follows :—" O Maharaja, since the birth of Rama, all things have become changed ; the Brahmanas perform their sacrifices with impunity ; they repeat the sacred hymns from the Vedas, which terrify the Rakshasas ; and the smoke of the homa rises high in the air and almost burns the Rakshasas. From all these omens, I conclude that our rule is nearly over ; and it is not proper at such a time for you to go to war. My counsel is that you restore Sita and make peace with Rama, otherwise no good will befall you."

At these speeches Ravana was greatly enraged, and he reproached his mother's father in harsh language ; and when Nikasha and her father Malyavan saw that Ravana was greatly enraged, they fled from the Council-hall.

CHAPTER XX.

Rama's war against Ravana.

After this Ravana ordered his army of Rakshasas to gather together and prepared to go out with them and do battle against Rama. And Mandodari his favourite wife tried to dissuade him, but he refused to hearken to her words. And he marched out of Lanka with a vast array of horsemen and footmen, and elephants and chariots, and there was a great battle. And there were many single combats, and Ravana fought first with Hanuman and then with Lakshmana, and last of all with Rama, and he was much discomfited ; and he reflected upon the power of Rama and sighed heavily. He then sent for his Counsellors and desired them to guard the city with the utmost vigilance ; and he gave orders that his brother Kumbha-karna should be awakened from his deep sleep, saying :—" My brother Kumbha-karna is very brave and powerful, and I have no doubt but that the moment he wakes he will relieve us from the terror of Rama. By the blessing of Brahma, he sleeps for six months and then wakes up for one day,

and for that day he is invincible. Wake him, therefore, without delay. Fear him not, show him no mercy, but beat him, if necessary ; only wake him ; for of what use can he be if he does not arise and save us from destruction ?”

Kumbha-karna on being awakened heard all that had taken place and rebuked Ravana for having excited the enmity of Rama. Nevertheless he mounted his chariot and went out against the Monkey army and put them to rout ; and he crushed Sugriva with a large stone and carried him away in triumph to the city of Lanka. Then Kumbha-karna again took the field, and Rama went out to meet him ; and after much fighting Rama severed the head of Kumbha-karna from his body, and the whole army of Monkeys rent the air with mighty shouts of “ Victory to Rama !”

When Ravana heard that his brother Kumbha-karna had been slain by Rama he was exceedingly grieved ; but his son Indrajit arose and said :— “ This is not a time for idle lamentation, for your enemies are roaring at your gate like lions. Behold, I will go out myself against Rama and kill him and all his army.” Indrajit then mounted the chariot ; and Lakshmana and Indrajit fought for a long while, until Lakshmana took the arrow

which had been given to him by Indra at the hermitage of Agastya and repeated the proper mantras and discharged it at his enemy ; and Indrajit fell dead, and his head was severed from his body. Then Lakshmana and all the Monkey army roared like lions and shouted :—"Victory to Rama !" And the gods in heaven began to shower flowers upon the head of Lakshmana.

When Ravana heard that his son Indrajit was dead he was seized with an agony of grief, crying out that he had now no son to perform his funeral rites. And he ordered his army of Rakshasas to make ready, and early on the morning of the new moon he marched out of the city ; and he pressed through the Monkey army, until he approached Rama and Lakshmana. Then Ravana and Rama abused each other for a while and at last fell to desperately ; and they discharged arrows at each other, which broke up chariots and turned back other arrows and possessed many wonderful powers marvellous to behold. At length, after much fighting, Ravana smote Lakshmana with a mace and it pierced his breast, and pinned him to the ground ; and none of the Monkeys, nor Rama himself, could draw out the mace from the heart of Lakshmana. Rama then

fought against Ravana, and compelled him to return to his city of Lanka.

When it was midnight Hanuman, at the request of the physician Sushena, set out to bring medicinal herbs before sunrise from the mountain Gandha-madana, which should restore Lakshmana; and Sushena took the herbs and beat them into a paste and put it to the nose of Lakshmana; and he was immediately healed.

After this Ravana sent several warriors, one after another, against Rama, but they were all slain; and he determined himself once again to take the field against Rama. But before going forth he went with joined hands to Sukra, the preceptor of the Rakshasas, and implored his aid. Sukra taught him certain mantras, and directed him to offer sacrifice in a secret place and repeat the mantras, whereupon certain weapons would come out of the fire and render him invincible; but Sukra warned him to observe a strict silence throughout, or the sacrifice would be devoid of all power. So Ravana returned to his palace and ordered the gates to be shut; and he went to his own apartment and placed guards all round it and carried the sacrificial materials into the room and barred and locked the doors; and he dug a large hole in the centre of

the room and commenced the ceremony. Meantime Rama was informed by spies what his enemy was about to do ; and he commanded Angada and Hanuman to go with an army of Monkeys and obstruct the sacrifice. Then the Monkeys swarmed into Lanka, forced their way into the palace, defeated the Rakshasa guards, broke open the doors of the Raja's apartment, and assailed Ravana on all sides, but he still persevered in the sacrifice. Then Angada went to the inner apartments, and seizing Mandodari by the hair, dragged her into the presence of Ravana and ill treated her before his face ; and Mandodari began to cry aloud for help, saying :—
“ Behold the difference between you and your enemy Rama ! See what he is doing for the sake of his wife, and what you are doing, while your own wife is being hurt and insulted.” At these words Ravana was aroused, he abandoned the sacrifice, drew his sword, and struck a blow at Angada ; and Angada, having spoiled the sacrifice, let Mandodari go and returned to Rama. Then Mandodari again implored her husband to submit to Rama, but he was inexorable and resolute to take the field.

Then Rama and Ravana fought on equal terms for a long while, and sometimes the victory

inclined to the side of Ravana, and sometimes to the side of Rama. At last Ravana became fatigued and could no longer draw his bow, and he dropped down in his chariot, and his charioteer seeing him in that condition drove him back towards Lanka. When he recovered his senses he ordered his charioteer to return to the field, and there he renewed the battle with Rama ; and the conflict was very desperate. At length after much fighting Rama took up a sharp arrow and cut off one of Ravana's heads ; but no sooner did the head fall upon the ground than another sprang up in its room. When they had fought together this way without intermission for seven days and nights, Matali the charioteer advised Rama to take up the Brahma arrow and discharge it at Ravana, as Ravana was destined to die by no other weapon. So Rama took from his quiver the arrow which Brahma had made in former times from the spirit of all the gods, and which Indra had left for Rama in the hermitage of Agastya. Rama then propitiated the Brahma arrow by suitable mantras, and discharged it at Ravana ; and it entered his breast and came out of his back and went to the ocean and washed itself and then returned to the quiver of Rama. Meanwhile Ravana fell to the ground and died ;

and the gods sounded celestial music in the heavens and assembled in the sky and praised Rama as Vishnu, in that he had slain that evil Ravana who wished their destruction.

CHAPTER XXI.

Triumphant Return of Rama.

When Vibhishana saw his brother Ravana slain, he fell down by the dead body and began to lament loudly. Meanwhile the tidings that Ravana was dead reached the inner apartments of the palace at Lanka, and all the wives of Ravana came out of the palace with dishevelled hair and loose garments, beating their breasts with their hands. The lamentations of Mandodari the chief Rani rose above all. And Rama was touched by her sorrow and desired Vibhishana to take the women back to the inner apartments and to perform the funeral rites of his brother Ravana ; and Vibhishana took away the women and performed all the funeral ceremonies of his elder brother Ravana, with the grandeur and magnificence which befitted the Raja of Lanka.

When the days of the mourning were over, Rama commanded that Vibhishana should be installed Raja of Lanka ; and when this was done he requested Vibhishana to bring Sita from the Asoka garden. Then Vibhishana went away in great delight, and when all was ready, a litter was

brought to the entrance of the Asoka garden, and Sita took leave of Sarama, the wife of Vibhishana, who had attended upon her ever since her own husband had been exiled by Ravana. And Sita spoke affectionately to Sarama and gave thanks for all the services and favours which Sarama had rendered her during her captivity. She then took leave of the other women and entered the litter, and in this manner she was carried from the Asoka garden to the plain without the city. Now as the litter approached the camp of Rama, all the Monkeys gathered round to see Sita, and Rama commanded that she should alight and walk, so that the Monkeys could see her ; and Sita did so. When Sita entered the presence of Rama, she stood with joined hands and bowed down at his feet ; but Rama heeded her not and spoke with harsh words, saying :—"I have killed all my enemies, and I have delivered you from captivity ; and now that I have removed my shame, I care not to behold you : I can never again receive you as my wife, for you have lived in the house of Ravana."

At these cruel words the eyes of Sita grew red, and raising her moon-like face, she said :—"O Maharaja, I do not deserve the harsh

language which you have used to me. I swear by my own virtue that I am chaste and unpolluted ; if you had formed a wish to cast me aside, you should have told me so long ago, that I might have put myself to death and thus have been spared this indignity."

Sita then turned to Lakshmana and said :—"You, who are the younger brother of my husband, prepare for me a funeral pile that I may put an end to all my sorrows by entering the fire." Lakshmana looked at Rama for his commands, and Rama assented ; and Lakshmana prepared a funeral pile and set it on fire. Then Sita offered up her prayers and entered the fire in the presence of all the inhabitants of Lanka and the whole Monkey army. Then Rama became lost in grief, and his mind wavered to and fro, and he said :—"Mad with rage. I have committed a great sin. Having delivered Sita after so much trouble and pains, I have become the cause of her untimely death. I reproached her for nothing. I shall never find such a faithful wife again." At this moment the gods and the Gandarvas appeared in the air, and Rama beheld his own father Dasaratha amongst them ; and Rama bowed down his head before the gods. Then, whilst all

were gazing upon the funeral pile, the god Agni came forth out of the flame, bearing Sita upon his knees as his own daughter ; and she was more beautiful than ever she had been before. And Agni gave her to Rama and said :—"Take her as your wife. She is without a stain. I know the hearts of all, and had she the shadow of a stain upon her chastity, she would never have passed in safety from me." And Rama took his wife and said :—"I know that my beloved Sita was chaste and true, but I put her to the test, lest men should blame me, and now I am free from all censure." And Rama took Sita by the hand and made her sit upon his left side upon his own throne ; and Hanuman offered flowers to Rama and Sita, and all the Monkeys and all the gods did the same. After this Dasaratha pronounced blessings on his son Rama and then returned accompanied by the gods to the abodes of bliss.

Next morning Vibhishna who was now Raja of Lanka prayed Rama to abide for a while in that city ; but Rama said :—"My exile of fourteen years is drawing to a close, and I must return with all speed to Ayodhya. My brother Bharata has vowed that he will enter

the fire unless I return immediately after my exile has been completed."

After this Rama commanded Lakshmana to destroy the bridge of rocks, lest there should be constant strife between the people of the Island and the people of the mainland. And Rama ordered the Pushpaka chariot to be got ready, in order that he might return to Ayodhya with Sita. Then Sugriva and all the Monkeys, and Vibhishana and all the Rakshasas prayed Rama that they might behold his coronation at Ayodhya ; and Rama bade them all ascend the Pushpaka chariot, and he mounted the chariot likewise, together with his beloved Sita, and the chariot rose high in the air and flew towards the north. And Rama described to Sita the field of battle in which he had fought against Ravana ; and he pointed out to her all the places whither he had journeyed, from the day when Ravana carried her away from the hermitage at Panchavati.

Now on the fifth day after the expiration of the fourteen years of Rama's exile, the chariot Pushpaka arrived at the hermitage of the sage Bharadwaja, which was at Prayaga, near the Chitra-kuta mountain ; and the sage welcomed

Rama and told him how his brother Bharata passed his days in a pit without the city of Ayodhya, reigning in the presence of Rama's sandals, subsisting on fruits and roots, lying on the bare earth and allowing the hair of his head to grow into knots. Bharadwaja also informed Rama that Bharata would put himself to death on the morrow, unless he heard that his elder brother was returning to Ayodhya ; so Rama sent a swift messenger to inform him of his arrival and prevent his entering the fire.

Next morning Rama despatched Hanuman to inform Guha, the Bhil Raja, of his arrival and also to carry the glad tidings to Bharata at Ayodhya. Then Hanuman went his way and told Guha of the coming of Rama ; and Guha gave himself up to delight, and his whole city was filled with rejoicings. Hanuman then proceeded with all speed to Ayodhya, and Rama followed shortly afterwards and was received with all joy by Guha, and then took his leave and departed for Ayodhya.

Meantime Bharata had heard from Hanuman that Rama was approaching ; and he summoned Vasishtha and all his other Counsellors and told them the welcome news ; and he ordered this

proclamation to be made known throughout the city by the beating of drums :—" Know all men that Rama is returning from his exile ; that to-day he is with Raja Guha, and that to-morrow morning he will enter Ayodhya. Cast aside all sorrow and grief and prepare to receive Rama. Let the whole city be adorned, and let worship be offered to every god. Let every horse and elephant and chariot be got ready, and let every man go out to meet Rama on his return to Ayodhya."

When the people of Ayodhya heard this proclamation, they rejoiced with exceeding joy. They weeded and levelled all the streets and roads and swept them clean and watered them with sandal water and strewed them with flowers and planted trees and betel-vines on each side of the high way. And they placed golden pots of water at the foot of each tree, with branches of mangoes in the mouths of the pots, and cocoanuts upon them ; and the necks of the pots, were adorned with garlands. All the houses were made clean in like manner, and music sounded on all sides, and many-coloured flags waved in the air throughout the city. Then the whole army of the Raj marched out of the city, and every one was happy and arrayed in rich

dress. All the women of Ayodhya also put on their brightest clothes to receive Rama ; and every man placed auspicious things, such as plantain trees, mangoes and pots of water, before his door.

When the news of these preparations reached the ears of Kaikeyi, and she heard that Rama was about to return to Ayodhya, she rejoiced exceedingly ; and she went to the apartment of Kausalya and was received with every respect. Next morning Kausalya and Kaikeyi and all the ladies and women of the place prepared to go forth and meet Rama, some in chariots, and some in carriages drawn by bullocks. At the same time, nearly all Ayodhya went out in procession to Nandigrama to receive Rama. After them went Bharata carrying the sandals of Rama upon his head, with the royal umbrella spread over the sandals, and two men fanning the sandals with milk-white chamaras ; and Bharata was surrounded by the Ministers and Counsellors of the Raj, and by all the Rajas who had come to Ayodhya to welcome Rama back.

Meantime Rama had taken leave of Raja Guha and was on his way to the city of Ayodhya

when he met with mighty procession which had come out to meet him. And Rama and Bharata approached each other and embraced each other : and Rama said to his brother — "Is all well with your Raj and your subjects and with the queens ?" And Bharata replied : — "All is well." Bharata then greeted Lakshmana, and Rama greeted Satraghna and his father-in-law Janaka. And Vasishthe and all the other Brahmanas came forward with rice and grass (a) in their hands and blessed Rama and said : — "Now that you have served the gods by killing their great enemy, it is the desire of all that you take your Raj and seat yourself upon the throne of your father." And all the people shouted "Victory to Rama!" And Rama went and bowed down at the feet of his mother Kausidya and at the feet of Samitra and Kaikeyi, and they embraced him and wept aloud for joy. Then when they reached Nandigram, Rama dismissed the chariot Pushpaka and bade it return to Kuvira who was its former master ; and Bharata prayed Rama to undertake the charge of the Raj, and Rama agreed but commanded Bharata to become once again reconciled to his mother Kaikeyi and to treat

(a) Blessings are offered by putting rice and grass upon the head.

her with the same kindness as before the exile.

After this Rama and his brothers were anointed with fragrant oils and bathed in perfumed water ; and they cast aside their dresses of bark and put on yellow garments and adorned themselves with every of ornaments ; and Sita was arrayed in like manner by the ladies of the palace. Then Bharata commanded that all the chariots and horses and elephants and litters should be brought up ; and Rama directed the Monkeys to select what conveyances they pleased. He then took Sita in his own chariot and placed her on his left side ; and Satrughna held the royal umbrella over their heads ; and Hanuman and Lakshmana fanned them with fans of rich embroidered silk cloth ; and Sugriva and Vibhishana waved the chamaras on either side, whilst Jambuban and Angada in like manner waved peacocks' tails. Then Bharata himself took the reins in his left hand and the whip in his right and acted as charioteer ; and the music began to sound, and the singers and dancers followed the musicians, and in this manner the procession moved on towards the city of Ayodhya. All those who had remained in the city now came out to see the entry of

but Rama, if my truth and purity are known to thee, receive me into thy bosom, open a passage for me that I may pass in safety into thy depths. I have undergone the slanders of mankind. I here pledge myself before thee never again to behold the face of any living creature. On hearing these words, all present were overwhelmed with grief; and the air resounded with their sighs.

At that moment a strange and wonderful event took place. The ground opened, and a splendid throne adorned with gems and supported by four large serpents rose from the chasm. The Earth, incarnate in female form, came from the gulf; and she took the hand of Sita and led her to the throne on which they both took their seats. The throne entered into the gulf before all present, and disappeared; the ground closed upon them, and Rama was overwhelmed with affliction.

Then after a while he was composed and finished the Aswamedha according to the rites enjoined in the scriptures. And Rama governed the Raj benevolently and made the people happy. And when Lava and Kusa reached their manhood, he made over the kingdom to them and ascended into heaven.



Sita entering the bosom of the Earth.

(Ravi Varma)

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